

# Which English Translation of the Bible is Best for You?

## A Comparison of over 30 English Translations of the Bible

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This is not a work which requires you to begin reading on page 1 and continue on to page 2 and then page 3. Quite likely, you may want to skip over much of this and go directly to the [Summary Table](#) (which is followed by some very important tables. At a glance, you will learn what you need to know about your translation and about the others which are out there. Once you have looked over some of the tables, then you may have an interest in reading about a particular translation or two. Because of this, I moved the hyperlinks to the very beginning of this document to provide you easier and quicker access.

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[The New English Bible \(NEB\)](#)

[NirV](#)

[The New International Version \(NIV\)](#)

[The New Jerusalem Bible \(NJB\)](#)

[New King James Version \(NKJV\)](#)

[The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament](#)

[NLT \(The Open Bible\)](#)

[NRSV](#)

[The New Testament in Modern English \(J. B. Phillips\)](#)

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[New World Translation](#)

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<sup>1</sup> I spend at least 2 hours a day, each and every day, exegeting the Bible verse by verse. In doing so, I refer to these two dozen translations and their notes and their additional material (I rarely, however, make any real use out of Moffatt's translation or the Jehovah Witness Bible). Therefore, every few days, I notice something significant about what one translation does, and I record it here. This is why this document gets updated so often.

Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament

The Twentieth Century NT

William's Translation of the New Testament

World English Bible (WEB)

Conclusions and Final Recommendations

Glossary

The Septuagint

TEV (the Good News Bible)

Young's Literal Translation

Significant Passages

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Software

Appendix

REB RSV

TNIV

**Preface:** This is an examination of the many translations of the Bible into English. As you read through this, I think you are going to be rather surprised. Generally those interested in which translation of Scripture is *best* are often conservative, fundamental, evangelical Christians. You will be surprised to know that one of the more modern translations, which has very conservative, evangelical leanings, is also one of the most inaccurate translations available. You may be surprised to know that one translation which is both in modern English and yet remains quite faithful to the original text is a translation that you very likely have never even seen. You will be surprised to note that the version which has the best footnotes dealing with textual criticism is a version that you have never heard of before (Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible*). The most literal English translation is also a version that you have never heard of before (*Young's Literal Translation*). You will be surprised to know that one of the very best of the modern translations (of the Old Testament) was not made by a Christian or a group of Christians, but was translated by the Jewish Publication Society. One of the surprising weaknesses of most translations is a serious lack of consistency (consistency is the quality of rendering the same Greek (or Hebrew) word with the same English word time and time again). However, there is one very consistent translation available to you, and yet, you probably have never heard of it (again, *Young's Literal Translation*).

What is the best English translation of Scripture? When I began this study, I already knew the answer to this; by the time I finished, I changed my mind—several times. In fact, I came to conclusions that surprised me (and I've studied the Bible for several decades).

Selecting the right Bible (or Bibles) is one of the most important decisions that you will make, yet few give this decision much thought. You might use the Bible that has been laying around your house unread for several decades; you might use the Bible your church uses, or you simply pick up a pulpit copy. Maybe a Christian friend suggested this translation or that. At best, you may glance through a quarter page comparison between a dozen choices, and select a translation based upon that. One thing which will surprise you, when you read this book, is that the best translation for Timothy is not necessarily the best translation for Paul.

What you will find out when you read this book is that there are more issues at stake than you first realized; I expect that you will change your mind once or twice, even though friends of your might not use the word *open-minded* when they describe you.

If you do not want to wade through a lot of reading, then you are welcome to go immediately to the **Summative Table**, which is found directly below.

I have given you a lot to wade through. You may find all the information that you seek in the table below. Once you get the quick and dirty information that you seek, then you may return to the individual examinations of the various translations for more information.

**Summative Table**

**Cut to the Chase...**

**Format of Translations**

Summative Table	
Very literal, almost word-for-word translations, designed for serious and careful study:	<b>ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASB, <i>Young's Literal Translation, The Emphasized Bible, The Amplified Bible.</i></b>
The best Bible (in order of preference):	<b>NKJV</b> with Scofield Notes; <b>NKJV</b> with NIV notes; <b>NASB</b> with Scofield Notes; <b>NASB</b> with NIV notes. I don't know if some of these even exist, but if I was to do it all over again, these would have been my choices for my primary Bible.
The translation is also good literature:	<b>KJV, NKJV, ESV, REB</b> and the <b>Tanakh</b> . One of the reasons that the KJV stood for so many years is, it was an accurate translation, but it was a powerful and literal rendering as well. O, that even Shakespear could this well write!
Other sources for very literal translations:	Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary on the Old Testament, offer a translation as they exegete any given passage. Apart from being in Old English, the translation is generally very good. Barnes occasionally has a passage or two translated out—however, this is not throughout his commentary. Kenneth Wuest has a four volume set of commentaries on much of the New Testament, and included is a very literal rendering of most of the books of the New Testament. Finally, I have a book called <i>The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament</i> and it has an interlinear word-by-word rendering of the New Testament, along with a slightly more free translation. The NKJV is printed along the side of the Greek in a different column.
Reasonably literal, orthodox, but relatively easy-to-read Bible translations:	<b>NASB, NKJV, ESV</b> and <b><i>The Amplified Bible.</i></b>
Literate, accurate and relatively easy-to-read Old Testament translation (this is a better translation, in many ways, than, for instance, the <b>CEV, NLT, REB</b> ):	<b>Tanakh (JPS).</b>
Modern English translation which is both easy to follow and yet reasonably accurate:	<b>God's Word™, NIV, <i>The Amplified Bible.</i></b>
Reasonably accurate, thought-for-thought translations	<b>God's Word™, REB, NEB, NAB, NJB, NIV.</b> All of these translations have their own weaknesses.
Best <i>reading</i> Bible (either for reading to yourself or for reading aloud):	<b>NLT, JPS (Tanakh), CEV, the Message, NAB, NJB.</b>

Summative Table	
Modern English translation with a conservative bias:	<b>NASB, NKJV, ESV, CEV, God's Word™.</b>
<b>Very</b> easy to read, easy to understand translations:	<b>NLT, TEV, CEV.</b>
Most pleasantly formatted or laid out:	<b>CEV, NLT.</b> The <b>Open Bible</b> (the <b>NLT</b> ) has the most extras, which are also pleasantly laid out. However, in both cases, the quality of the extras is at times questionable.
Modern English translations which stray significantly from the original text (we might call these the more imaginative texts):	<b>CEV, NLT, TEV.</b> Note that, even though the CEV has a very conservative bias, it is not very close to the original.
Modern English translation with a fairly theologically liberal bias:	<b>NEB, The Living Bible, Moffatt's Translation.</b>
Traditional Jewish order for the Old Testament:	The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> ; the <b>Tanakh</b> .
Bibles in chronological order:	The Reese Chronological Bible ( <b>KJV</b> ); The Narrated Bible ( <b>NIV</b> ). On the plus side for Reese, there are dates on almost every page. On the negative side, these dates are, in some cases, way off. Also, I don't know that I agree with its sequencing of the narratives. The Narrated Bible seems to flow, whereas Reese's Chronological Bible seems to be more choppy; however, one very nice feature of Reese's Bible is that the history of Israel and Judah are laid side-by-side, one occupying one column, the other occupying the other. In the Narrated Bible, Judah is covered for awhile, and then Israel, and then Judah again. For intensive study purposes, there is no clear favorite. For light studying, either would work. If you need dates, then Reese's is for you. If you simply want to read the Bible through chronologically, then the Narrated Bible is the best choice.
Strongly recommended:	<b><i>The Amplified Bible, God's Word™, ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, Young's Literal Translation, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible.</i></b>
Recommended as a <b>second</b> Bible:	Any of those directly above, as well as <b>NIV, REB, NEB, NJB, NAB, NLT.</b>
Recommended if your reading skills are particularly weak or if your English is poor:	<b>TEV, NLT, CEV.</b>
Translations with part of all of the Apocrypha—not every printing of these translations will have the Apocrypha included (one of my <b>NRSV</b> 's has it; and two do not).	The <b>NRSV</b> , the <b>REB</b> , the <b>NAB</b> and the <b>NJB</b> .
The translation with the greatest number of footnotes on variant readings (however, these predate the Dead Sea Scrolls):	Rotherham's <b><i>Emphasized Bible</i></b> .

Summative Table	
The two translations which appear to make the most use of the Dead Sea Scrolls.	<b>NRSV and NAB.</b>
Translations which tend to follow the <b>Septuagint</b> as often as not:	Rotherham's <i>The <b>Emphasized Bible</b></i> , the <b>NRSV</b> , the <b>REB</b> , the <b>NAB</b> and the <b>NJB</b> . The <b>TEV</b> also tends to follow the Septuagint (but not as often as the others mentioned).
Translations which tend to follow the Massoretic text almost exclusively:	The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> , the <b>Tanakh</b> , <b>God's Word™</b> , the <b>KJV</b> , the <b>NKJV</b> , the <b>NASB</b> , the <b>NIV</b> and <b>Young's Translation</b> .
Carry the <i>imprimatur</i> , which indicates that this translation is acceptable to the Catholic Church. Catholic Church scholars were involved in the translation and sponsorship of the <b>REB</b> .	<b>NRSV, NAB, NJB.</b>
Influenced by <b>charismatics</b> .	<b>NAB, NJB, NRSV, REB, RSV, TEV.</b>
Updated or supplanted versions:	<b>ASV, KJV, NEB, RSV, The Living Bible.</b>
Successors to above:	<b>NASB, NKJV, REB, NRSV, NLT (or, The Open Bible).</b>
Best footnote content:	<b>Scofield's KJV, NIV Study Bible</b>
Best formatting of footnotes:	<b>NLT, NIV Study Bible</b>
Worst formatting for footnotes	<b>NRSV</b>
Very good information on LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls in footnotes	<b>NRSV</b>
Excellent information on the LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls in footnotes	none
Excellent information on LXX, Vulgate, and other ancient versions in footnotes	Rotherham's <i>The <b>Emphasized Bible</b></i>
Almost a total lack of footnotes	<b>God's Word™, Complete Jewish Bible, NAB, NJB, Young's Literal Translation</b>
Not recommended at all for any reason:	<b>Moffatt's Translation, the New World Translation</b> (the self-serving Jehovah Witness Bible translation).
Cut to the Chase...	

<b>Summative Table</b>	
<b>My Recommendations:</b>	For a first Bible, I would suggest either the <b>NASB</b> or the <b>NKJV</b> (if either one is available with Scofield notes, then it comes with an even higher recommendation). The <b>ESV</b> is also an excellent Bible, and free on the internet. I believe that everyone should own at least one accurate rendering of Scripture. As a second Bible, I would strongly recommend the <b>NIV Study Bible</b> . Finally, for a third version, I would recommend either <b>God's Word™</b> or <b>The Open Bible</b> (the <b>NLT</b> ). If your reading level is low, then I strongly recommend the <b>TEV</b> (also known as the <b>Good News Bible</b> ). If you do much by way of personal Bible study, you need Scofield's Notes.
<b>Format of Translations</b>	
Poetry is distinguished from prose.	CEV, The Complete Jewish Bible, God's Word™, the James Moffatt Translation, NAB, NASB (barely), NJB, NRSV, The Open Bible (NLT), REB, Rotherham's <i>Emphasized Bible</i> , TEV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> (again, barely).
Written in true paragraph form.	CEV, The Complete Jewish Bible (barely), God's Word™, NAB, NJB, NIV (barely), NRSV, The Open Bible (NLT), REB, TEV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> (barely).
Written strictly verse by verse. Each new verse is formatted as a new paragraph.	<i>The Amplified Bible</i> (I have an old version from the 1960's), NASB, NKJV, KJV (wherein, the poetry is not generally distinguishable from prose—it depends a lot upon who packaged the KJV).
Verse numbering is unobtrusive.	The Complete Jewish Bible, CEV, NAB, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRSV, REB, TEV.
Verses are written on along the side rather than interspersing them as the divisions occur.	The Complete Jewish Bible (in the poetry sections only), the James Moffatt Translation, NEB, NKJV (in the poetry sections only), NRSV (in the poetry sections only).
Words not found in the original manuscripts but added to help with the understanding of the verse are distinguished.	God's Word™, KJV, NASB, NKJV, <i>Young's Literal Translation</i> .
Two verses are occasionally combined so that a better understanding of the passage can be achieved (that is, you cannot determine where one verse ends and the other begins).	CEV, the James Moffatt Translation, The Open Bible (NLT), TEV (very occasionally).
Verse order is changed with the intention of providing an easier to understand translation.	CEV, the James Moffatt Translation.
In my opinion, poetry should look like poetry and prose should look like prose. Even the proverbs should look different from poetry or prose. Prose should have groups of verses placed together in paragraph form. There is no distinguishing of verses in the original languages, so the idea of combining two or more verses is not a bad idea. The less obtrusive the verse numbering is, the better.	

## Additional Hebrew Reference Works

<b>Interlinear Hebrew-English Bibles</b>	<b>Owens' Analytical Key to the Old Testament</b> (it is outstanding as a language aide); the reference numbers refer to the <b>Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon</b> (which itself is a must for anyone who delves into the Hebrew of any Old Testament passage). English translation with it is only fair to good. <b>Zodhiates' The Complete Word Study Old Testament</b> is also a good interlinear for the Old Testament, with more helps in the back of the Bible (however, the parsing consists of considerably less information than Owen's work and the reference numbers are Strong's).
<b>Hebrew Concordances</b>	You <i>must</i> own <b>The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament</b> if you have any interest in the exegesis of the Old Testament and understanding of the use of the Hebrew words.
<b>Hebrew Lexicons</b>	<b>Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</b> is given as the standard. However, <b>Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament</b> is invaluable; you should have them both, as Gesenius is better organized and, in my opinion, offers better English equivalents. For instance, תִּירָח (תִּירָח) [pronounced <i>tee-RAW</i> ], is said to mean <i>wall, fence, enclosure</i> in Gesenius; in BDB, its meanings are given as <i>encampment, battlement</i> . Strong's #2918 BDB #377. The former set of meanings is much more accurate. If you rely on <b>Owens Analytical Key to the Old Testament</b> , then you will need BDB, as it is keyed to BDB. Now, <b>Strong's Concordance</b> has Greek and Hebrew Lexicons in back, which are adequate for new believers, and <b>Zodhiates' Complete Word Study Old Testament</b> has an incomplete, but fairly good lexicon in the back (and it also has <b>Strong's Concordance</b> in back as well). Of these, only <b>Strong's</b> offers the pronunciation of the words ( <b>The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance</b> also offers pronunciations).

## Additional Greek Reference Works

<b>Interlinear Greek-English Bibles</b>	<b>Zodhiates' The Complete Word Study New Testament</b> and <b>The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament</b> are both very good works. <b>Zodhiates</b> has the KJV and above the words are Strong's numbers along with a limited morphology (the gender, number and person are not given); the Greek text is off to the side. The latter work has the NKJV off to the side, with the Greek text in the middle of their Bible. Below the Greek text is a literal and then a slightly less literal rendering. There is nothing by way of Strong's numbers or morphology. Quite frankly, I have not found anything for the New Testament as good as <b>Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament</b> (which is, by the way, keyed only to BDB numbers and not to Strong's numbers).
<b>Greek Bible Reference work</b>	The <b>Analytical Greek New Testament</b> . This does not have an English text, but it has a complete morphology of each Greek word. No Strong's numbers, unfortunately. You might call this a <i>grammatical</i> interlinear.
<b>Greek Concordances</b>	For work in the Greek, you must own <b>The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament</b> . For the beginner, <b>Zodhiates' Complete Word Study New Testament</b> is an interlinear with a reasonable Greek concordance.

## Additional Greek Reference Works

<b>Greek Lexicons</b>	<b>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</b> (3 volumes); Arndt and Gingrich's <b>Greek-English Lexicon</b> ; Zodhiates's <b>Word Study Dictionary New Testament</b> ; Thayer's <b>Greek-English Lexicon</b> ;
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## Additional Reference Works

<b>Commentaries: Barnes Notes</b>	<b>Barnes Notes</b> are somewhat uneven—some books are given great, exegetical examinations, and others receive far less attention. Nevertheless, this is one of the least expensive and most insightful set of commentaries available. <b>Barnes Notes</b> are tremendous, readable, scholarly and literate. <b>Barnes Notes</b> is also available with e-sword.
<b>Commentaries: <i>Thru the Bible Radio</i></b>	<b>J. Vernon McGee's <i>Thru the Bible Radio</i></b> commentary (it's available as individual books, as a book or on at least two different CD's, and it can be downloaded from his website as well). McGee is not even a tenth as detailed as Barnes. However, McGee covers almost every major doctrine there is in language that anyone can understand. His overviews and illustrative material, which often seems too simple, belie his theological brilliance. You will get a very good, general understanding of any chapter of Scripture from examining McGee's work; and you will chance upon almost every major theological doctrine, sometimes without realizing it.
<b>Commentaries: Keil and Delitzsch's <i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i></b>	Although I quote from <b>Keil and Delitzsch's <i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i></b> , their writing is dense, sometimes difficult to follow, and it presupposes a working knowledge of several languages. Let me give you an example; this is a quote from Keil and Delitzsch: Just as ἡ ἀ signifies <i>imo vero</i> (58:3) when it comes after an antecedent clause that is expressly or virtually a negative, it may mean “nevertheless, ὅμως,” when it opposes a contrastive to an affirmative assertion, as is very frequently the case with οὐκ or οὐχι. <sup>2</sup> Did that make sense to you? This sentence illustrates what I mean by the descriptor <i>dense</i> . And you may have noticed that in one sentence, apart from English, we had three other languages bandied about. Keil and Delitzsch are generally very accurate, they provide a great many insights, and even though I don't quote from them extensively, I often use the information that they present. What tends to happen when I study their work in association with a personal exegetical study is that they will, more than any other commentary, cause me to go back and revise or better explain what I have already written. They push me to be more precise in my handling of Scripture. One sentence from them might cause me to go back into my exegesis and add a two-page table to more carefully cover a particular topic. If you are not involved in careful exegetical study, then this commentary would just gather dust on your shelf. However, if you exegete Scripture, and you recognize the importance of the original languages, then this might be the commentary is for you.

<sup>2</sup> Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 321.



## Additional Reference Works

<b>Horrible Commentaries:</b>	<p>Lest you think that I simply named the commentaries which I have as the best that is out there, think again. The ITC series, from what I have read so far (<i>1 &amp; 2 Samuel</i>) is horrid. Gnana Robinson, the author of this particular booklet, at the very beginning superimposes 20<sup>th</sup> century values and rhetoric on his examination of the Scripture. His supposition in chapter one causes him to completely misinterpret the portion of the sacrifice that was given to Hannah. He makes a host of theological errors (such as saying that the Bible allows for a heathen to worship God in their own way)<sup>3</sup> as well as factual errors (Robinson mixes up his Bethshemesh's in passages where it is clear that the cities referred to are in different tribal areas).<sup>4</sup></p>
<b>Weak Commentaries:</b>	<p>Gordon's commentary on I &amp; II Samuel, although not nearly as bad as Robinson's, is simply unremarkable. Gordon has an extensive vocabulary, which makes reading his commentary enjoyable. Unfortunately, the read does not yield much fruit. The additional notes found in the NIV Study Bible and Scofield's Bibles are far superior to anything found in either of these two commentaries.</p>
<b>Old Testament History</b>	<p>I wasn't certain how to classify Edersheim's <i>Bible History Old Testament</i>, but I <i>had</i> to mention it. Edersheim writes, very eloquently might I add, a history, in his own words, of the Old Testament, including such details as we might miss in our reading of Scripture. You may think, <i>why not just read the Old Testament?</i> Here's why: (1) Edersheim is a very enjoyable read. If your mother or father ever put you to bed by recalling a Bible story from memory, this is what Edersheim does, with the added bonus that he has a marvelous way with words. (2) There have been several instances where, in my study of an Old Testament passage, that I really did not get the gist of what was happening. For instance, in the battle between the 20 Philistines and Jonathan with his armorbearer, I did not understand the description of 1Sam. 14:14, nor did I correctly picture the fight which ensued. I pictured this movie version with Jonathan and his armorbearer maybe back-to-back, fighting twenty men, like, say, Buffy and one of her slayerettes against a pack of demons. However, this is not the picture painted by Scripture, but I could not see it (and, in my defense, I had first gone through nearly 20 translations and a half-dozen commentaries, and still did not have the picture). Then when I read what Edersheim wrote, the picture became quite clear.</p> <p>Let me add that, Edersheim's work is different from the typical commentary, as he focuses more upon the narrative than the theology. This does not mean that he ignores theology; he just spends more time with the story, which tends to convey the theology behind it.</p>
<b>Bible Dictionaries:</b>	<p>I tend to use J. D. Douglas's <i>The New Bible Dictionary</i> the most often, although there is little about it that sticks out in my mind, apart from it being a very good one volume source.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Gnana Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations*; International Theological Commentary; Eerdmans's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, ©1993; p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Gnana Robinson, *1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations*; International Theological Commentary; Eerdmans's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, ©1993; p. 40.

## Additional Reference Works

<b>Bible Encyclopedia:</b>	My favorite is far and away <i>The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> . Because of the huge number of contributors, there will be times that it will contradict itself and many times that the material has a liberal bend.
<b>Manners and Customs Reference Works:</b>	I have several, but Freeman's is generally the best. It is arranged in the order of the Bible, rather than topically (like Gower and Matthews).
<b>Miscellaneous Reference Works:</b>	<i>Figures of Speech Used in the Bible</i> by Bullinger. Although I have read comments now and again which are negative concerning Bullinger, this is an outstanding work and helps to clarify and classify various idioms and figures of speech which are found in Scripture.

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[Summative Table](#)

## Guide to Recommended Hebrew Reference Works

Name	Type	Extra Features	Strong Points	Limitations
<b>Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</b>	Lexicon	Back index allows you to look up any Hebrew word if you have Strong's number.	Better word organization than Strong's or Gesenius (e.g., cognates are located near each other; homonyms are better distinguished). This is <i>not</i> equivalent to owning a Gesenius Lexicon.	Definitions are sometimes weak (this is a translation of a lexicon); the definitions themselves are often poorly organized. Word pronunciation not given; not even a pronunciation guide.
<b>Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament</b>	Lexicon	English index (find the English word in back, and you will be given the page number it occurs on).	Much better definitions than BDB; the individual word definitions are better organized. The words themselves are placed in order essentially by Strong's numbers. This is <i>not</i> equivalent to BDB above.	Word pronunciation not given; not even a guide to pronunciation. Cognates are often separated. Grammatical and analytical index in back <i>should</i> have been included with the individual words.

## Guide to Recommended Hebrew Reference Works

Name	Type	Extra Features	Strong Points	Limitations
<p><b>The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament</b></p>	<p>Concordance</p>	<p>Hebrew to English and English to Hebrew index in back. That is, look up the English word, and all the Hebrew words used to translate it are given, along with their location in this concordance.</p>	<p>Keyed to and organized by Strong's numbering system. Pronunciation for each word given. Location of individual verbs organized morphologically (e.g., all the Qal participles of same verb are grouped together). A portion of each verse is given with each location of every word. The translated word is italicized.</p>	<p>It seems as though my first version (a blue cover) had the BDB numbers as well. It also contained an appendix in back which contained the Hebrew and Chaldean names in back. The new version does not have either.</p>
<p><b>Owens Analytical Key to the Old Testament</b></p>	<p>Interlinear Old Testament</p>	<p>It is what it is; it is the best I have found in that regard. It is organized by the Massoretic text.</p>	<p>Excellent morphology of words given (for instance, a verb may be given to be the Qal imperfect 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural; a noun is denoted by number, gender and person). Words are keyed to BDB numbers. Text is covered practically one word at a time. Abbreviations are much easier to understand (you don't need a <i>card</i> to understand what's up).</p>	<p>Not keyed to Strong's numbers. There are several mistakes. Differing Greek translation could be better explained. Certain key prepositions not differentiated (except in the Hebrew). There are several mistakes throughout. By the fourth book, you could tell he ran out of steam, and we do not have the vocabulary form of the verbs listed in each and every case (in the Hebrew, this is helpful).</p>

## Guide to Recommended Hebrew Reference Works

Name	Type	Extra Features	Strong Points	Limitations
<b>Strong's Concordance</b>	English Concordance	Very basic Hebrew and Greek lexicons in back ; each word's pronunciation is given along with the English transliteration. There is also a basic pronunciation guide included. There is a comparative English concordance in back, giving English words that are similar.	Strong's number accompanies English word so you can tell if an English word is used to translate one, two or ten different Hebrew or Greek words. Even small words, like <i>and</i> , and their locations are listed.	Lexicons in back are too brief and primarily give the English equivalents as found in the KJV.
<b>Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies</b>	A study of the Old Testament words from the English	The English word is given and followed by the Hebrew words used to translate that word; the Old Testament locations are then given.	You get a clue as to how many different Hebrew words are hidden behind the same English word.	The other works cited made this work superfluous for me.
<b>Zodhiates's The Complete Word Study Old Testament</b>	KJV Old Testament with Hebrew helps	Great, yet brief, explanation of the Hebrew grammar (e.g., <i>just what is a Qal infinitive absolute?</i> ). Good pronunciation guide. A good, albeit incomplete, Hebrew Lexicon in back. Strong's Lexicon is also found in back.	Above each English word is the corresponding Strong's number and the morphology. Footnotes on OT are sparse (less than one per page), but good.	The morphology is coded and incomplete (the number, gender and person of verbs are not given). Hebrew lexicon in back does not have the actual Hebrew or a pronunciation of the word; only the English transliteration and Strong's number are given.

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Hebrew Grammatical Works				
	Organization/Level	Extra Features	Strong Points	Weak Points
<b>Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar~Syntax</b>	Good		This is the first or second grammar book that I reach for.	
	Second year Hebrew grammar reference book			
<b>Kelley's Biblical Hebrew</b>	Good		This is usually the last book that I reach for.	
	Extremely basic beginner's textbook			
<b>Mansoor's Biblical Hebrew</b>	Fair		When I need a basic explanation, I go to this grammar book first.	
	Very basic beginner's textbook			
<b>Seow's A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew</b>	Good		First or second grammar that I reach for.	
	Beginner's textbook with interesting excursions			

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Translations Influenced by the Greek and Hebrew	
Translation	1Samuel 10:10b
<b>The Amplified Bible</b>	...he spoke under divine inspiration among them.
<b>CEV (The Promise)</b>	...and right there in the middle of the group he began prophesying.
<b>The Complete Jewish Bible</b>	...and he prophesied along with them.
<b>The Emphasized Bible</b>	...and he was moved to prophesy in their midst.
<b>God's Word</b>	He prophesied with them.
<b>KJV</b>	...and he prophesied among them.
<b>NASB</b>	...he prophesied among them.
<b>NKJV</b>	...he prophesied among them.
<b>NLT (The Open Bible)</b>	...he, took, began to prophesy.
<b>The Septuagint</b>	...he prophesied in the midst of them.
<b>Young's Literal Translation</b>	...he prophesies in their midst

Translations Influenced by <b>Charismatics</b>	
Translation	1Samuel 10:10b
<b>James Moffatt Translation</b>	...a band of dervishes met him; he prophesied along with them,...
<b>JPS (Tanakh)</b>	...he spoke in ecstasy among them.
<b>NAB</b>	...he joined them in their prophetic state.
<b>NJB</b>	...he fell into ecstasy with them.
<b>NRSV</b>	...he fell into a prophetic frenzy with them.

## Translations Influenced by Charismatics

Translation	1Samuel 10:10b
<b>REB</b>	...he too was filled with prophetic rapture.
<b>TEV (The Good News Bible)</b>	...he joined in their ecstatic dancing and shouting.

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

### Characteristics of the More Literal Translations

	<i>Amplified Bible</i>	Complete Jewish Bible	God's Word™	NASB	NKJV	NRSV	<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X			X	X		X
Capitalizes <b>all</b> nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X	X	X	X	X		X
Does <b>not</b> exhibit undue charismatic influence	X	X	X	X	X		X

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

### Characteristics of the Moderately Literal Translations

	<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	JPS	Moffatt's Translation**	NIV
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead		X*		
Capitalizes <b>all</b> nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X			X
Does <b>not</b> exhibit undue charismatic influence	X			X

\* The pronoun *us* in Gen. 1:26 is not capitalized, but individual pronouns which refer to Jehovah God of Israel are. This is a *Jewish* translation, so we would not expect a pronoun referring to the *Spirit of God* to be capitalized.

\*\* Moffatt's translation may belong in the *less literal* category. He is occasionally close to the Hebrew text and at other times, he free-styles.

The following is a check-off list for some of the characteristics of various translations. An X in the box means that this is a true characteristic of the translation.

## Characteristics of the Less Literal Translations

	CEV	NAB	NEB	NJB	NLT	REB	TEV
Capitalizes pronouns which refer to members of the Godhead							
Capitalizes <b>all</b> nouns which refer to members of the Godhead	X	?		?	X		
Does <b>not</b> exhibit undue charismatic influence	X				X		

The question marks in the category of capitalizing nouns which refers to all members of the Godhead indicate that there are several places where it is likely that Spirit of God is found in the Hebrew, but their translation hides this fact and renders it wind (e.g., Gen. 1:2 1Sam. 19:20). After spending several years with this book, I warmed up considerably to the paraphrases. However, I find this chart, when compared to the previous 2 charts, to be disturbing.

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**To the Reader:** You obviously have an interest in the Bible, which is why you are reading this book right now. You might have one or two Bibles that sit in the trunk of their car, at a pew at their church, on a shelf, or you might even carry it around with you. Someone might say something—a friend, a television or radio preacher, your pastor—and you will reach for the Bible to confirm or negate what they have said. There are occasions when you might find yourself in a theological argument, and you will reach to your Bible for support. There are times when you need guidance, times when you study, and you reach for your Bible. You might even be a pastor or a deacon, giving thought to what Bible should be read from, or distributed, or placed in the pews.

More than likely, you know at most a handful of Greek or Hebrew words. You may or may not be familiar with the history of the Bible, and it is likely that your understanding of textual criticism is sketchy at best. These are topics which are generally the domain of the clergy, and not those generally taken up by the man in the pew. But those who translated your Bible—they (ideally) know the Greek, Aramaic and /or Hebrew; they know about how the Bible was transmitted from generation to generation; they are aware of the manuscripts which are in existence at this time and their relative importance and significance. It is their job to make certain that all of these things have been taken into consideration while they produce yet another modern English translation of Scripture. What you need to know, as a consumer, is, how close is my Bible to the original languages? Were the Dead Sea Scrolls considered? Should they have been considered? How much confidence can I place in the Bible that I own? If I am holding to any particular belief, is it based upon an accurate rendering of Scripture, or does it simply reflect the theological bias of those who translated my Bible?

The first thing that you will do is turn to the section which deals with your translation of the Bible—that is what you should do. Find out if your Bible is any good. Find out if the translators carefully weighed the nuances of the original languages; find out if they examined the various extent manuscripts; find out if the thrust of their work was producing a Bible that was accurate or readable (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive goals). If your Bible appears to have a few shortcomings, then browse this book to find another translation which might be more suited for you (yes, given your background, theological training and formal education, one translation may be better suited for you in particular).

You may have an older version of the Bible—a KJV, the ASV or the RSV—and you want to get something that is easier to read. What exactly will be sacrificed in order to find a more readable version? You may have been

raised on the KJV and you want a more modern version—should you turn to the NKJV? Will it simply be more of the same old, same old? Should you purchase a TEV, CEV or an NIV?

In fact, let me say a word about which is the best translation that you can acquire: when I began this project, I thought that I would be able to provide a list of the translations in order from best to worst—you know, a top ten list for the best translations of the Bible. I was wrong—after spending considerable time on this project, I decided that choosing a Bible can be a fairly individual thing, and rightfully so. Now, I will certainly be able to group various translations—there are a half-dozen which are clearly the best and a smaller handful that you do not need to own. But, as to which translation you personally should choose? You will answer that question for yourself, I will only help facilitate that decision.

I expect that this book will perform two primary functions: First, this book will allow you to examine your primary Bible critically, to note its strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, this book will help you to make a reasonable selection for a second or third Bible; or it will help you to choose another primary translation to use.

I should also mention that you don't have to read each and every page in order to make an informed decision. I have intentionally summarized each translation at the beginning and have grouped the translations into various categories at the end, so that you can skim through this book, and stop and examine it more carefully when you need more detailed information. Do you want to know which translations are approved by the Catholic Church, but you don't want to read through each and every section of this book? I took care of that for you. It's at the end of this book in the summary. Do you want to know which translations took into account the manuscripts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls? Summarized at the end of this book. Let's say you are going to buy a Bible for a friend or family member with limited reading skills—I've placed those recommendations in the summary. In other words, what I expect is that you might read through a few of the summaries, then you will find yourself going back to the individual sections to get more information. My point is, this book lends itself to skimming or perusing; to reading from front to back or back to front.

And one more thing: this book changed my mind, the author, about many of these translations.

That being said, I should admit to certain prejudices (which I believe to be Biblically based). First of all, I do prefer a more literal version over a less literal version. If a particular phrase is an idiom, then I would rather see the gist of the idiom revealed in a footnote rather than attempted in the text itself. Secondly, I am not a sympathizer of the charismatic movement. I disagree with several key points of their theology (notably, their modern take of speaking in tongues, healing and the possibility of losing one's salvation). Thirdly, I would prefer to capitalize the pronouns which refer to any of the members of the Godhead (in fact, I would prefer capitalizing many things associated with God's Word and various things which have been ordained by God). These predispositions being admitted to, still I believe I was able to present a very objective examination of the various texts. With regards to these points of doctrine, I simply will point out which translation holds to this doctrine, and which does not; which capitalizes those words associated with the Godhead and which does not. Interestingly enough, the translations which seem to have been influenced by the charismatic movement also tend to be the translations which do not capitalize pronouns which refer to any member of the Godhead.<sup>5</sup> These translations also tend to be those which are more of a *thought-for-thought* translation, as opposed to a word-for-word translation.

**Preface:** What follows is a rather lengthy comparison of the various common English translations which I personally use. I originally expected this to be about 20–30 pages long; it is now in excess of 180 pages. Please do not mistake this for the tripe which I have run across on a regular basis where some old guy puts forth a half dozen arguments as to why we should all use the King James Version. There was a time period, particularly for the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that each time some translations came out, that there would be this set of pastors on the sidelines railing against each new translation, simultaneously touting the virtues of the authorized version. In many cases, these were simply traditionalists with little to say, their best argument often

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<sup>5</sup> By the way, the justification that these pronouns should not be capitalized because that is a matter of interpretation is nonsense. Much of their translation is a matter of interpretation; therefore, rationalizing that they do not capitalize because of this is a copout. Wherever the capitalization is questionable, the translator need only footnote the translation *He* with "or, possibly *he*."



being that, when it comes to memorizing Scripture, we need one version so that everyone will memorize each verse in the same way.

On the other hand, there were a handful of men who did give some reasonable arguments against some of the modern translations. A fellow named Moser put out several pamphlets disparaging many of the modern translations. Sometimes his arguments were petty; however, many times he criticized them with good reason. In fact, it was through reading his pamphlets that I became much more discerning in my examination of the modern English translations.

When I began this project, I really assumed that I would be able to come to the conclusion, “Everyone ought to purchase such and such a translation.” And, if I was to lay money on it, I would have initially bet that I would strongly recommend that everyone purchase the NASB. I have since discovered that there are a great many factors involved when purchasing a Bible. Most people should have at least two translations, and it is almost impossible to give a blanket recommendation as to which translations these should be. However, if you do not want to wade through all of this information, then feel free to go to the [Summative Table](#), where I will sum up the strengths and weaknesses of the various translations. Now that I have come very nearly to the end of this never-ending project, I would probably make a blanket recommendation of the [NIV Study Bible](#), even though I believe the [NASB](#) and the [NKJV](#) to be better translations. However, I do not necessarily mean that you, individually, should purchase that particular translation. As I said, there are a great many factors involved.

Interestingly enough, there are some translations, such as the [NLT](#) and the [Good News Bible](#) that I was predisposed to dislike; and some that I was predisposed to like ([Complete Jewish Bible](#)). However, as I used these various Bibles and began to look at them with a critical eye, I often changed my mind. After examining what the translators did, their viewpoints, and the resulting product, I was very often swayed toward liking many more translations than I expected; and there were a small handful which I would not recommend at all to anybody.

Now, will we ever return to a *King James-only* usage? No; not in this world nor in the next. We have several generations of people who have been raised on versions other than the King James Version, who, if they picked up a KJV, would not understand it. Given that we must accept that there are other translations out there which are not going to go away, the best we can hope for is that those who obtain a Bible for themselves actually give some thought as to which translation would most suit them. An important point that I want to make, which will cause some of you to grind your teeth, by the way, is that choosing one or two translations can be a very personal choice. That is, for me, if I had to choose between the NASB, the NIV or TEV, such a choice would be easy—I would select the NASB. However, there are others who, for various individual reasons, would be better off choosing the NIV or the TEV. Prior to my examination of these translations, I would never have thought that I would come to a conclusion like that. My original intent was almost to list these translations in descending order from best to worst. Having examined them in detail, I no longer feel that is appropriate.

About four years after I began this project, I noticed that my examinations of the various English translations were becoming longer and longer—some of them exceeding ten pages. It was then that I realized that I needed a synopsis of each translation at the beginning. Now you can go from translation to translation and get a brief synopsis of each.

When someone chooses to write about any particular topic; especially when comparing and contrasting different things, there are two things which are true: (1) the writer feels passionately about that which he writes; and, (2) he has an opinion already. Unless it is his job, a writer is not going to write about something that he cares little about. Just like any other artist, a writer is practically forced by his soul to express himself. And no one is going to start writing about topics that he is ambiguous about. So, certainly, I had biases prior to beginning this project, yet I promised myself that I would approach this project with a relatively open mind (and, as a matter of fact, I did change my mind about certain translations—in fact, I changed my mind several times as I examined these various translations). And, interestingly enough, the more I studied the various translations, the more open-minded I became about this topic. For instance, there were translations which I eschewed at the beginning, that, when I began to study them, I became less convinced of my original position; and, near this project’s end, I could see where such a translation would have a proper place in this world. To be more specific, when I began this project,

I had a decided prejudice in favor of literal translations and I repudiated that which was a paraphrase. Now, a year and a half after beginning this project, and even though I prefer a good literal translation for most of my own work, I acknowledge a real need for those translations which are less than literal, but which convey the original ideas more clearly. However, I have also noticed, as I looked more carefully, that many of the newer, modern-English translations tend to have become more liberal in their theology. It is not that the essential doctrines of the faith are completely lost in some of these translations; however, some are more obscure and more difficult to uncover than they are in the older, more word-for-word literal translations. My point being that, certainly you should own a modern-English version which is easier for you to understand; however, you may want to choose that version carefully, and, for personal, in-depth studies, use a more literal translation (e.g., the KJV, NKJV, NASB, *Young's Literal Translation* or *The Emphasized Bible*).

Now, when I began this, was I out to come up with as many reasons as I could to disparage this translation or that? Not really. As mentioned, I had some personal prejudices which I believe I shed. What I have attempted to do is as follows: (1) I want you first to have a general feel for each translation which I cover; (2) I want to give you an idea as to how close to the Greek or Hebrew that each translation is; (3) I want to let you know if there is any discernable slant or prejudice in the translation itself; (4) and finally, I want to give you enough information to make an informed decision when buying your next translation. I can almost guarantee that, if you are reading this, that you will end up buying another translation or two.

I found out soon enough that all modern-English translations were not equal. This certainly seems like a fairly obvious point. However, the types of inequities quite frankly surprised me. The CEV, which is one of the most fundamentalist-leaning translations, is also one of the least literal. It is as though the translator examined the original passage in the Hebrew or Greek, took a nap, and then woke up and wrote down from memory what might be a reasonable paraphrase. The result is that the CEV is littered with words and phrases which have no actual counterpart in the original language. *God's Word™* struck me as having a rather presumptuous name and I originally just tossed it into my pile of *here's another modern English translation*. Well, it turns out that they offer probably the most literal of the modern English translations, their accuracy being very close to that of the NASB or the NKJV. However, once and awhile, they insert a few important words which are not found in the original languages. Two **charismatics** pointed me in the direction of *The Open Bible*, which is the New Living Translation. I automatically assumed that this version would lean toward a charismatic interpretation. Wrong. In terms of the theological leanings, this is a very accurate Biblical translation. On the other hand, the NRSV, which I assumed would be fundamentalist in all regards, leans toward the charismatic point of view, something that I would have never guessed prior to entering into this study.

Are there versions you should avoid? Absolutely—there are several modern translations of the Bible out there that you should avoid at all costs. They are inaccurate and slanted.<sup>6</sup> There are others out there which, on the one hand are reasonable, but get way too imaginative at times.<sup>7</sup> Once you have read through most of this, you will know where your translation stands and whether or not you need another translation for your own personal study.

Now my purpose is this: If you have read this far, then you have some interest in the translations which you have or you are interested in picking up a couple of additional English translations to add to your theological collection. Let's say you are looking for a more obscure translation, and you cannot decide between **Young's Literal Translation** or **Moffatt's Translation** (a very easy decision, by the way); I am hoping that you will benefit by the work that I have put in here as to determining what translation or additional translation that you will seek out. Just owning these Bibles and making occasional reference to them actually is not enough. When I began this project, I owned about 25 different translations and/or flavors of translations. At that time, I could not have told you which translation had a more liberal bend, which held to orthodoxy, which was sympathetic to the Catholic Church. As I continue in this study, I have found these things out and am passing them along to you.

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, Moffatt's translation (the translation that the Armstrong's appeared to be rather fond of) or the NWT (the translation touted by the Jehovah's Witnesses).

<sup>7</sup> The CEV, for example.

I need to point out that this is a work in progress, and not all of the translations listed above will be found below. Bear in mind that I am working on them as we speak. Because of a kind word said by Titus in his links (when I posted this on the web several years ago), I went back to work on this and this is much improved over what I had here before. Furthermore, if you would like to cut to the chase and go directly to the [conclusions](#), bypassing all the excess, then click on [this](#).

I should also mention that there are often partial and extended quotes and paraphrases from the prefaces of these Bibles which are not so identified. You may assume that any phrase of more than three words which is italicized came from the Bible which is being reviewed. The primary purpose of this is to provide an easy comparison between the Bibles herein discussed. It appears as though the dark green type refers to a fairly literal translation and that the blue type is a much freer translation. Those in black are somewhere in the middle.

One important consideration is *from what manuscripts are these translations taken?* Many of you possibly even think that there is some perfect set of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts out there upon which a translation should be based. Wrong! In the Old Testament, although there are several Hebrew manuscripts, our oldest dates back to the end of the first millennium A.D. (and the reason is that, when a new manuscript was copied, the old one was destroyed). The vowel points for the Hebrew were not added until thousands of years after the original manuscripts were written (there were no vowels whatsoever in original written Hebrew). There are clearly mistakes and problems with the Hebrew manuscripts, and there are clearly places where words were left out, words are unintelligible, and words whose meanings are long gone. What a translator does at this point is a key to his philosophy as both a translator and as a scholar of the original manuscripts. The ancient Koine Greek is a better known language which is much easier for us to crack. The Hebrew Bible, around 200 B.C., was translated into the Greek. Therefore, this Greek Old Testament provides us invaluable helps in determining the meaning of some words and verses. However, this was a very uneven translation. Most of the Law was well-translated from the Hebrew to the Greek; however, several books, e.g., Kings, was very poorly translated. Furthermore, there was no careful consensus on what *type* of translation was to be done then (it was the first translation of an ancient book ever done). Therefore, some books and passages are rendered very literally and some are given a very free translation. It's kind of like half of the Bible was translated by Robert Young (a staunch literalist) and the other half was done by the Good News Bible people. And then these versions were shuffled together. So, what a translator does with the Greek manuscripts is very telling. Do they depend upon it too much? Do they use it wisely?

You might think that there are several translations which follow the Greek Septuagint almost exclusively. Not so. There are passages in the Greek Septuagint which differ from the Hebrew which virtually no English translation even makes mention of (e.g., 1Sam. 1:14). However, for the most part, the NEB and the REB and occasionally Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* tend to lean toward the Septuagint more than most other translations. However, there are many times when a translation that usually follows that Greek and then chooses not to even when the Greek is the more likely reading. For example, in 1Sam. 14:18, in the Hebrew, Saul calls for the Ark of God. Now, his troops have, up until this point, deserted him in droves. They are in a desperate situation. The last time that the Ark was brought into battle, terrible things happened to the Israelites (and to the people who captured it). Furthermore, if the Ark was brought to Saul, a cadre of men would have to have been sent out to fetch it from a nearby city (which makes little sense, since the Philistines could have mounted an attack upon Saul and his army at any time). In the Greek, Saul asks for the ephod to be brought to him, which is what one would request in order to determine God's will and to get direction from God. This ephod was in the camp (1Sam. 14:3), and awhile later, Saul does inquire of God (1Sam. 14:37). In other words, the most likely reading is that which is found in the LXX: Saul calls for the ephod. Surprisingly few translations chose to follow the Septuagint, however.

### 1Samuel 14:18—Do We Follow the Greek or the Hebrew?

**Followed the Hebrew reading (*Ark*) but footnoted the Greek reading (*ephod*).**

NRSV, NKJV, NIV (the NIV, in their footnote, clearly favored the Greek text)

<b>Followed the Hebrew reading and did not footnote the Greek.</b>	NASB, Owen's Analytical Key, Young's Literal Translation, KJV, Complete Jewish Bible
<b>Follow the Greek reading and footnoted what is found in the Hebrew.</b>	REB, God's Word™, NEB, NLT, TEV
<b>Followed the Greek reading and did not footnote this passage.</b>	NAB, NJB, Moffatt's translation
<b>Ignored the Greek and the Hebrew in the translation; however, footnoted (roughly) the Hebrew text.</b>	CEV

It is fascinating to see what translation follows what. No matter what rendering is chosen, this passage should be footnoted.

This leads me to say a few words about *Textual Criticism*. Some believers think that there is one accurate Hebrew manuscript and one accurate Greek manuscript that we follow in order to get our English translation. To be more precise, many Christians don't really give much thought at all to the original language source for our English translations. With regards to the New Testament, there are 24,000 ancient Greek manuscripts which are employed.<sup>8</sup> Some of these manuscripts have the entire text of the New Testament; some are only fragments of the New Testament. Some of these texts were copies made less one century after the original writing was done. Some were made several hundred years later. However, these 24,000 manuscripts are not in complete agreement. The science of textual criticism is to come up with a manuscript which will reflect what is believed to be the most accurate Greek text with respect to the original writings. Quite frankly, the New Testament can be pinned down to a fairly exact rendering of the original text.

However, the Old Testament is something else again. First of all, for centuries, our best Hebrew manuscripts were copies made a millennium after the closing of the Hebrew canon, and which had the addition of chapters, verses and vowels, none of which were present in the originals. Furthermore, we only had a handful of these Hebrew manuscripts. What we had in addition to these few Hebrew manuscripts were Greek translations of the Hebrew. Even though the Greek translation (called the Septuagint) was made within 200 years of the closing of the canon, it was a very uneven translation—some portions of Scripture were carefully and literally rendered, and other portions were a paraphrase. And there isn't just one Greek manuscript, but there are many versions of the Septuagint and many revisions of same. In addition to this, there are translations of the Hebrew made into other languages, as well as paraphrases from the Hebrew into other ancient languages. So, the job of the Old Testament textual critic is much tougher than that of the New Testament textual critic. The Old Testament manuscripts are in a variety of languages, some portions of which are careful translations, some portions of which are paraphrases; and the time between the closing of the canon and the manuscripts which we possess is a matter of hundreds of years rather than tens of years. What has been helpful is that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has given us some additional manuscripts which are closer in time to the original Old Testament writings.

The more that you know about textual criticism, the more important an issue it will become to you. Personally, I don't want a Bible which simply footnotes *this is how this verse should read; the Masoretic text is somewhat different*. I would like to know upon which manuscripts these deviations are based. So far, no translation is completely satisfactory in this regard (although two translations might be classified as good when it comes to substantiating their choice of readings). There are many modern English translations which render the text as they see fit and do not footnote a passage which is based upon a variant reading.

You will notice, as you read portions of this book, that I have spent more time examining the Old Testament than the New with regards to these various translations. There are several reasons for this: (1) The Old Testament is

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<sup>8</sup> Josh McDowell, *A Ready Defense*; Here's Life Publishers; ©1990; p. 45.

where there is the most disagreement and there are two primary source manuscripts which are followed: the Hebrew text (which is what the Old Testament was originally written in) and the Septuagint (the Greek text, a translation of the Hebrew into the Greek)—which are followed. Which translation leans toward one or the other is important. (2) Our knowledge of ancient Greek is far superior to our knowledge of ancient Hebrew; therefore, the Old Testament Greek text is extremely important for this reason. Also, the Greek translation is based up manuscripts which are over a millennium older than the manuscripts which we have. (3) Now, in contrast, there are simply Greek texts which are our concern with the New Testament. There tends to be a greater agreement between the various Greek texts. (4) Finally, most of my own personal exegetical work is in the Old Testament, so most of my illustrations and comparisons will come from the Old Testament.

Not only are there many different translations of the Bible, but there are many flavors of various translations. I personally own (as of this writing) around 40 different translations of the Bible, versions of translations, and compilations of translations. For instance, there are many flavors of the King James Bible. If one must own and work out of the KJV, then I see the only reasonable choice as being *Scofield's Reference Bible*. If you want to go with the NIV, then by all means, pick up the NIV Study Bible (or *The Narrated Bible*). The included features are certainly worth the extra few dollars. As I go through these various translations, I will also comment on the versions which I own and the extras which come with them.

I cannot over-emphasize that for your primary Bible, buy the expensive binding. In retrospect, I have never regretted picking up the Bible with the expensive leather binding; however, I also own several Bible's which are now held together by tape—Bibles whereby originally I saved a few dollars by purchasing cheaper binding—those purchases I regret. If you ever have to transfer the notes that you make in the margins from one worn Bible to the same translation, you will recognize the importance of getting a Bible with a good binding (although such an exercise is not a waste of time).

I have recently discovered some lengthy pamphlets (about 80 pages each) dealing with very, very negative reviews of *Today's English Version*, *The New English Bible*, and *The Living Bible*. They are all written by the same person (M. L. Moser, Jr.). Now, having admitted to some predisposition toward the literal translations, I have also been won over, in part, by some of these *thought-for-thought* translations as being reasonable versions of Scripture to own. As I perused Moser's books, I must admit that he had some very valid points. I had first dismissed him as a KJV-only preacher who was only justifying his position. However, upon a closer examination of the passages which he had problems with, I was forced to admit that many of the new translations veer both in theologically and in translation from the KJV. In most cases, their translation reflects a theological predisposition rather than upon a more accurate rendering of the original language or a more up-to-date rendering of the original. There are certain theological areas where some of the modern translations have gone soft (e.g., the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, and the cross).<sup>9</sup> In this age of sloppy theology, such things demand a careful examination. In several instances, my examination of some of these translations was both superficial and too accepting. I have attempted, in some of the Bible translations which I have re-examined, to be more critical of what they have done with regards to orthodox doctrine. I must herein give credit to Moser for causing me to more carefully examine these various translations than I had previously.

It is important to recognize that we are in a spiritual war. I have spoken to believers who attend churches whose doctrines are wrong, but the atmosphere and the fellowship feels right to them. I have seen outstanding ministries become worthless over a short amount of time. I have seen believers sue one another, despite the clear teaching of God's Word. I have met believers whose personal experience is more important to them than the Word of God. So we should expect that there will be some serious theological problems with some translations. Although I did not think much of Moser simply from the titles of his pamphlets, I must admit that he brought home some important points concerning the translations of God's Word where some orthodox doctrines are carefully watered down by the wording of the translation. The discovery of Moser's pamphlets has caused me to go back and to re-examine many of the translations in the light of particular passages.

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<sup>9</sup> The publisher (The Challenge Press) of his lengthy pamphlets leans toward the critical, even publishing a critique of *The Scofield Reference Bible* (I don't have this pamphlet, unfortunately).

Note to self: I have not done the entirety of any translation yet. I have only gone through the first page of the **NASB** and of the first introduction of the *Complete Parallel Bible* (**NAS**, **NJB**, **NRSV** and **REB**). Also, in this study, I have noticed a great many translations which I do not have, including: Phillips' *NT in Modern English*; Wuest's *Expanded Translation of the NT*; *An American Translation* by William F. Beck; *The NT in Plain English* by Charles Kingsley Williams; *The Letters of Paul: An Expanded Paraphrase* by F. F. Bruce; *the Jerusalem Bible*; Ronald Knox's *Catholic Version*; *the Confraternity Version*; *The Berkeley Version*; and *The Living Bible*.

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[Summative Table](#)

## Significant Passages

There are certain passages of Scripture which are extremely important theologically, and therefore, need to be rendered correctly. When it comes to salvation, we should look at a couple of representative passages: John 3:16 and 6:28–29. When it comes to the person of Christ, John 14:6, 9. Prophecies about Jesus Christ: Isa. 7:14 9:6–7 Matt. 1:23. Inspiration of Scripture: Heb. 4:12 2Peter 2:20–21.

I will examine each Bible translation individually; however, prior to this, it would be a good idea just to see what each Bible says with regards to the most important doctrines of Scripture. I think that my approach will be as follows: I will take a few passages, translate them from the Hebrew or Greek; and then see what others have done with them. I will not list every single translation, but I will list those which have missed the mark, in my opinion, and comment as to why. Sometimes, if the rendering is interesting, or has a good footnote, I will list the translation as well. However, most of the time, most of these Bibles are going to accurately render the Hebrew or Greek into English; for this reason, I don't believe that it is necessary to give out every English translation.

Furthermore, I will not include the complete exegetical table of the Hebrew or Greek, nor will I include my commentary on the verse; however, these can be found in other documents which I have produced.

### Prophecies About Jesus Christ:

One of the passages often examined in when various translations are compared is Isa. 7:14

Kukis slavishly literal: [For thus gives Adonai Himself to you a sign: behold, the virgin \[is\] pregnant and she is bearing a son and she called His name Immanuel.](#)

Kukis moderately literal: [Therefore, Adonai Himself will give you a sign: listen, a virgin \[is\] with child and she will bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel \[which means, \*God with us\*\].](#)

The complete word-by-word exegesis of the Hebrew of this verse may be found in Isa. 7.

If you have studied and compared the various English translations, you may have come upon this verse, and there are two sides to the argument: some argue that this word unquestionably means *virgin* and others argue that this is a more general term, and that it can refer simply to *a young woman [possibly even married]*. I've glanced through the passages where this word occurs, and I don't find its use to compel me one way or the other, apart from this particular passage. Here's the thing: if a young woman is pregnant or a young married woman is pregnant, then this is not much of a sign. The idea that *the Lord Himself gives to you a sign* seems to lose its power, if that sign is just that some young woman is going to be pregnant. Now, if that woman is a virgin, then *that* is a sign!

Here is how others did:

*The Amplified Bible* [Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, Behold, the young woman \*who is\* unmarried \*and\* a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel—God with us.](#)

Albert Barnes (revised) BBE	. For this cause the Lord himself will give you a sign; a young woman is now with child, and she will give birth to a son, and she will give him the name Immanuel. The BBE uses <i>a young woman</i> rather than <i>virgin</i> and includes the adverb <i>now</i> , which is not found or implied in the Hebrew.
Complete Jewish Bible	Therefore <i>Adonai</i> himself will give you people a sign: The young woman will become pregnant, bear a son and name him 'Immanu El [God is with us].
CEV	But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel. There are times that the translation of the CEV is absolutely baffling; that is, from where did they get this? However, the CEV also tends to be very accurate doctrinally speaking, so passages like this tend to be accurate.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Wherefore let My Lord Himself give you a sign,— Lo!   a Virgin   <being with child and giving birth to a son> thou wilt call his name Immanuel. Rotherham gives no fewer than 5 footnotes for this verse. It would be fantastic if someone would update and modernize Rotherham's translation, taking into consideration the Dead Sea Scrolls which we now have access to. These footnotes give an explanation to Rotherham's reasons for the translation of certain words in this verse.
ESV <i>God's Word™</i>	.
HCSB	.
HNV	.
JPS (Tanakh)	.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	.
KJV (Scofield)	.
Latin	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.
LTHB	.
MKJV	.
Message	So the Master is going to give you a sign anyway. Watch for this: A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us). Although I am not crazy about the rendering <i>the Master</i> (it is capitalized, however), I am glad to see that the meaning of <i>Immanuel</i> is given.
Moffatt's Translation	An omen you shall have, and that from the Eternal himself. There is a young woman with child, who shall bear a son and call his name 'Immanuel' (God is with us);... Although <i>the Eternal</i> is a nice touch, there is no justification for this in the original languages.
NAB	.
NASB	.
NEB	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and will call [or, <i>you will</i> ] him Immanuel [that is, <i>God is with us</i> ].
NIV	.
NJB	The Lord will give you a sign in any case: It is this: the young woman [Perhaps Ahaz's wife, about to give birth to Hezekiah, but Isaiah sees it as symbolic of the fulfillment of royal messianic prophecies] is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel. The NJB has very few footnotes, which is why this one stands out. It is certainly an interesting comment. Very few of the translations offer footnotes or commentary interpreting this verse within the context of the passage.

NKJV  
 NLT  
 NRSV

.  
 .  
 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman [Greek, *the virgin*] is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel [that is, *God is with us*]. The NRSV is the only English translation which points out that the Greek translation of the Hebrew word means *the virgin*.

NWT

Therefore Jehovah himself will give YOU men a sign: Look! The maiden herself will actually become pregnant, and she is giving birth to a son, and she will certainly call his name Im-man´u-el.

Owen's Translation  
 REB

.  
 Because you do, the Lord of his own accord will give you a sign; it is this: A young woman is with child, and she will give birth to a son and call him Immanuel [that is, *God with us*].

The Septuagint

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin will conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and you will call his name Emmanuel.

TEV  
 WEB  
 Young's Literal Translation  
 Young's Updated LT

.  
 .  
 .  
 .

Grade				
A	B	C	D	F
Amplified Bible*, CEV, Emphasized Bible*, ESV, God's Word™, HCSB, HNV, Tanakh, Scofield's KJV, LTHB, MKJV, Message, NAB, NASB*, NIV*, NKJV*, NLT*, NRSV, REB, TEV, WEB, Young; Latin Vulgate; Greek LXX	NEB*, NJB*	CJB*, Moffatt*, NWT		BBE

\* will signify *extra credit*; the translation provides either a footnote or a clarification which helps with our understanding of the verse.

What is remarkable, and nice to see, is that most of these translations accurately rendered this crucial verse.



## American Standard Version (ASV)

### Version examined:

**Summation:** A modernization of the King James Version. There was an attempt to retain the literalness but, unfortunately, not the literary flair of the KJV.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The American Standard Version

**Translators:** Original revision was made by the English and American Revisers; where there were differences, the English Revisers (who initiated the work) would have the authority to make the final pronouncement. Apparently, what was issued was a translation which had an appendix that contained the changes which the Americans preferred but were outvoted by the English (and, interestingly enough, not all American-approved renderings were placed in this appendix). Since the original work, the English Revisers disbanded and the American Revisers continued their work, issuing a translation in 1901.

**Date of Translation:** This was a revision made of the KJV (1611). From what I can gather, the first revision was a dual effort on the part of American and English translators made between 1881–1885. Although there was talk of doing a revision every 14 years or so, the English counterpart disbanded. In 1901, the American group revised the KJV again, resulting in the American Standard Version.

**Stated Purpose:** (1) There were certain, specific updates which were done. *Jehovah* would replace the translation LORD; *sheol* would be used consistently throughout (rather than *grave, pit or hell*); and *who* and *that* would be used rather than *which* when referencing persons. (2) There were a number of renderings which were made by the Americans in the original editions which the English overruled—some of these were included in the appendix, some were not. However, these changes were placed into the 1901 ASV. (3) There were changes made to the original KJV which the Americans saw as unwarranted and which injured the original sense of the passage; in these places, the original text was restored. (4) The American Revisers rescinded some changes originally agreed to. (5) The new translation would revise the use of the words *justice, judgment* and *ordinance*. In fact, in the preface, there were a number of words which were dealt with individually to indicate how they would be used and how this would be a change from the previous text. (6) These revisers intended to update the obscure language and phrasing. To give you an idea as to the reading level, let me use their text: *We are not insensible to the justly lauded beauty and vigor of the style of the Authorized Version, nor do we forget that it was been no part of our task to modernize the diction of the Bible. But we are also aware that the rhetorical force and the antique flavor which we desire to retain do not consist in sporadic instances of uncouth, unidiomatic, or obscure phraseology. While we may freely admit that the English of the Scriptures can, as a whole, hardly be improved, yet it would be extravagant to hold that it cannot be bettered in any of its details. What was once good usage is often such no longer; and we can see no sound reason for retaining such expressions as “smell thereto” (Ex. xxx. 38), “forth of” (instead of “forth from”), etc.*<sup>10</sup> (7) The revisers also consulted foreign Bibles (German, French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian) for some specific changes. (8) Many of the footnotes of the AV were left out, as they did not really help much with the translation. (9) Headings were added as a benefit to the reader, but not to influence the exegesis of the passage. (10) Careful revisions were made with respect to paragraphs and punctuation.

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<sup>10</sup> *American Standard Version*; American Revision Committee A.D. 1901; Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York; ©1929, p vii.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The revisionists seemed to do most of their work with the KJV.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** The revisionists appeared to do most of their work with the KJV.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments

**Vocabulary:** Difficult with much of the Old English retained (*thine, thy*)

**Grade Level:** 12<sup>th</sup> grade or higher; in fact, I suspect that most 12<sup>th</sup> graders would not be able to understand a majority of the preface.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:** The pronouns referring to our Lord are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** This follows the standard English order of the Old and New Testament books.

**Strong Points:** This is a very literal translation.

**Weak Points:** The ASV retains too much of the Elizabethan language of the KJV.

**Criticisms:** I should have liked to have seen more of a break from the difficult Elizabethan language of the KJV.

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Prose looks like prose; poetry like poetry.

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:** Their footnotes deal exclusively with the translation and alternate renderings.

**Personal Comments:** I was originally going to let this go without even including this in my comparison of translations, despite the fact that this was the first Bible that I owned (I was an unbeliever at that time). However, there were several things that this translation attempted to do, which appealed to me. Instead of using LORD to refer to the sacred Tetragrammaton *YHWH*, they were one of the very few translations to render His Name *Jehovah*.

This version has been supplanted by the more modern New American Standard Bible. I would have preferred to see the NASB retain the use of *Jehovah* where appropriate.

**Additional Features:** At the time that this version came out, there were relatively few additional features.

**Recommendations:** I honestly can't imagine someone preferring this version over the more modern NASB.

**Additional Notes:** I don't know that you could even find a new copy of the ASV.



## The Amplified Bible

### Version examined:

#### Summation:

An occasional word or phrase is amplified; additional nuances are given of this word or phrase. An occasional word is inserted to better explain the passage. However, none of this is not done in such a way as to be distracting. Although this might not be a Bible you would choose to read aloud from, it is a good Bible in terms of accuracy and it is reasonably easy to understand.

### Preface:

**Translation:** *The Amplified Bible*

**Translators:** It appears to be the Lockman Foundation. It was a group of Hebrew and Greek scholars and special mention is given to Frances E. Siewert, B. Lit., B.D., M.A., D. Lit., the Research Secretary.

**Date of Translation:** 1958–1965. The New Testament came out in 1958, and the entire Bible came out in 1965.

**Stated Purpose:**

1. It should be true to the original languages.
2. It should be grammatically correct.
3. It should be understandable to the masses.
4. It should give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place which the Word gives Him. No work will be personalized.<sup>11</sup>

The Publisher's Foreword reads, in part: *...scholarly translators have worked diligently on English versions designed to faithfully present the Scriptures. In contemporary language. THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE is not an attempt to duplicate what has already been achieved. Rather, its intent is to progress beyond the point where the others have stopped. Its purpose is to reveal, together with the single word English equivalent to each key Hebrew and Greek word, any other clarifying shades of meaning that may be concealed by the traditional word-for-word method of translation. Now, possibly for the first time the full meaning of the key words in the original text is available in an English version of the Bible.*<sup>12</sup>

On the inside cover of *The Amplified Bible* there are comments from various pastors, bishops and theologians (most of them PhD's). Dr. W. E. Sangster writes *No translation from one language to another can ever be exact. Exact translation is as impossible as a square circle. The Amplified New Testament is unique in that its skillful and scholarly parentheses bring out shades of meaning which any normal translation is compelled to arbitrate between. I commend it warmly. It opens the Scriptures in a new way.*<sup>13</sup>

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** *The Amplified Bible* tends to lean toward the Hebrew MT instead of Greek LXX (e.g., Judges 1:18 2:3 15:5 18:17–18 19:18 1Chron. 1:51a Job 15:30b). Generally, where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, *The Amplified Bible* will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in that same passage. There is a portion of Judges 16:13–14 which is obviously missing from the Hebrew but is found in the Greek; however, *The Amplified Bible* does not include this in their translation. Similarly, the first

<sup>11</sup> *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; Preface.

<sup>12</sup> *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; Publisher's Foreword.

<sup>13</sup> *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; Back dust jacket flap.

sentence of 1Chron. 1:51 is found in the Hebrew, but not in the Greek. Textual critics would tend to leave it out as well. However, *The Amplified Bible* includes it. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; *The Amplified Bible* follows the Hebrew. *The Amplified Bible* follows the Hebrew anyway. In 1Sam. 19:10–11, the final two Hebrew words in v. 10 (*that night*) are placed with v. 11 in the ancient Greek translation. *The Amplified Bible* simply placed these two words with v. 10 and then again in v. 11.

#### **Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

#### **Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** *Tongues* in I Cor. 12–14 is generally preceded by *[unknown]* in *The Amplified Bible's* translation. the brackets mean that this word is not found in the original Greek but is supplied by the translators in order to *better explain* the context (in other words, it is a matter of interpretation).

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Reasonable. I was expecting wordy, but that was not the case. There were times when the original Hebrew was toned down somewhat. In the Hebrew in Judges 19:2, this Levite's mistress is said to *commit adultery* or *to fornicate* about the time she left her husband. In *The Amplified Bible* it reads that she was *untrue*.

**Grade Level:** Junior-Senior High school level.

**Assumptions Made:** The Bible was clearly put together by evangelicals who believe in the pre-eminence and deity of our Lord.

**Bias:** This will have a evangelical Christian bias, reflected in its notes and in the translation. One of the most important doctrines to orthodox believers is the doctrine of the virgin birth, which, in some modern translations, has been watered down. The virgin birth is alive and well in *The Amplified Bible* in Isa. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23. In fact, it is probably even more strongly stated in *The Amplified Bible* in Isa. 7:14 than it is in the KJV. There are some who hold to the KJV over all others, one of those reasons being its strong witness to the deity of Jesus Christ. There are several passages which testify to the deity of Christ which have been restated in several modern translation in such a way as to water down that doctrine. This is not the case in *The Amplified Bible*; some examples would be Matt. 1:23. One of the great Old Testament verses testifying to the trinity is lost in some modern translations. It is clearly stated, however, in *The Amplified Bible*: **Come near to me and listen to this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it happened I was there. And now the Lord God has sent His Spirit in and with Me** (Isa. 48:16). Another Old Testament which is often watered down in some newer translations, but not in *The Amplified Bible* is Zech. 12:10: **And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace or unmerited favor, and supplication. And they shall look [earnestly] upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one who is in bitterness for his first-born.**

**Description of Translation:** Tends to be wordy and concepts are repeated within the same verse for emphasis. There are times when a theological dissertation is given where one is not needed and without the benefit of brackets (Acts 16:31). For *less important* portions of Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges), the translation tends to be concise, succinct and quite good.

The emphasis in this translation is a reasonable translation of the Greek and Hebrew and the interpretation, for the most part, is left up to the exegete.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns, even relative pronouns, referring to deity, are capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Typical KJV order.

**Strong Points:** Words that are not there are placed into brackets, but this is not a consistent practice. See *Additional Notes* for other uses of brackets.

Sometimes their translation can be very helpful. There is a common mistake made with 1Sam. 7:2 where the time frame is confused with the amount of time that the Ark remains in Kiriath-jearim. In fact, some translations actually screw this up so badly, that the total length of time the Ark is in Kiriath-jearim appears to be 20 years (which would encompass the entire reign of Saul—40 years—and his selection process). This would make little sense. However, *The Amplified Bible* renders 1Sam. 7:2: *And the Ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for a very long time [nearly 100 years, though Samuel's entire judgeship, Saul's reign, and well into David's, when it was brought to jer]. for it was twenty years before all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.* [1Chron. 13:5–7.] Their translation keeps the reader from becoming confused as to how long the Ark remained in Kiriath-jearim. The only problem is, I think the time period is probably between 60 and 80 years, and not 100.

**Weak Points:** Even when there is clear precedent for a passage, e.g., Joshua 15:59b being found in the Septuagint, but missing in the MT, *The Amplified Bible* will leave this out as well. There are times when it gives us far more than is found in the original, without noting that this is amplification rather than a continuation of the translation (Acts 16:31 is a prime example). The NASB renders this verse as: And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.” *The Amplified Bible* reads: *And they answered, Believe in and on the Lord Jesus Christ—that is, give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping, and you will be saved; [and this applies both to] you and your household as well.*<sup>14</sup> Whereas, this is supposed to be the essence of *The Amplified Bible*, it tends to be distracting and, in some ways, misleading. Now, the explanation is that parentheses and dashes would be used to *signify additional phrase of meaning included in the original word, phrase or clause of the original language*; still, it's difficult to determine when something is a translation and when it is an expansion. Since there are parts of Scripture which require an em dash or a set of parentheses, the amplified portion of a translation would have been better served with the consistent use of brackets and/or braces.

**Criticisms:** A liberal theologian will feel out of place using this translation of Scripture. In some very succinct passages, where people are encouraged to believe on Christ, *The Amplified Bible* continually adds (trusts, clings to, relies on); perhaps concerned that *easy believe-ism* is just too easy (see, for instance, John 3:16, 18, 36). In other words, although *The Amplified Bible* supports many of the orthodox doctrines of Christianity, it tends to imply that salvation is not easy for us to apprehend.

ZPEB offers its own criticisms: ...“*amplification*” of course, opens the door to debatable interpretation. Often, the “*amplification*” is merely superfluous; nothing is really added by inserting “*changed*” in parentheses after “*transformed*” (Rom. 12:2). A version of this type should be used as a help, with a more conventional version, not as an authority by itself.<sup>15</sup>

### **Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Simply put, this is the worst layout of any of the translations. There are two columns with no differentiation between poetry and prose. Each verse is a new paragraph, whether it is a continuation of the previous verse or not. Notes and Scriptural references are often included in the verse in brackets (some notes are found below as well). The KJV (in most cases) and the NASB (in most cases) is laid out similarly, which is a big mistake in translating the Bible. Chapters and verses were added by man at a later date—they are not a part of inspired Scripture; therefore, pre-eminence should not be given to their divisions. If anything, the numbering of the verses should be minimized as much as possible.

### **Section Headings:** None

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<sup>14</sup> These additions are from Thayer and Weust, both outstanding Bible scholars; however, we are not told here that we have slipped into a theologically based amplification of this passage as opposed to a simple translation of what is actually there.

<sup>15</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 581.

**Footnotes:** There are actually very few footnotes in this version (it is not unusual to go a dozen pages without a footnote), and the ones which are found are often very good. What the translators did is put many of the notes in brackets in the verse itself. In these brackets, we will find limited Scriptural references (as few as one per chapter at times), clarifications (e.g., Judges 14:19, where Samson is identified as the person that the Spirit comes upon; or Judges 15:20), and translations of proper names (Judges 15:17, 19). Most of the footnotes are related to **textual criticism**.

**Personal Comments:** Although this translation does an awful lot of interpretation, it generally tends to be very accurate in its interpretation. At first, I thought that the translators took the KJV and worked from there; however, there are many places where apparently they worked from the original languages and developed a much better rendering of the language and meaning than is found in the KJV. It is at once, both reasonably literal and reasonably easy to read and apprehend.

Once and awhile, *the Amplified Bible* gets carried away with its interpretation containing perhaps even too much information. An example of this would be Job 15:11:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	The Amplified Bible
<b>Job 15:11</b>	[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?	You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	Are God's consolations [as we have interpreted them to you] too trivial for you? Is there any secret thing [any bosom sin] which you have not given up? Or were we too gentle [in our first speech] toward you to be effective?

As you see, *The Amplified Bible* introduces the middle sentence which is not found in the Hebrew, Greek or even in the Aramaic.

**Additional Features:** None in mine.

**Recommendations:** Dr. Billy Graham is quoted on the inside cover: *Get a modern Translation. The Amplified New Testament is easy to understand. It is the Bible written simply so common people can understand its meaning. The Amplified New Testament is the best study Testament on the market. It is a magnificent translation. I use it continually.*<sup>16</sup> Additional recommendations from pastors of Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist Presbyterian churches and organizations are quoted, as well as various scholars and a president of a Bible college. I sometimes take this version for granted, as I have had mine so long as a second Bible. It would certainly be an easier Bible than the KJV, for instance, to understand; yet one which would be just as accurate.

**Additional Notes:**

<sup>16</sup> *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; inside front cover.

## The Bible in Basic English

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:**

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**



**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:** Poor rendering of a verse: [I will not give sleep to my eyes, or rest to my eyeballs,...](#) (Psalm 132:4). Why not just eyes, *eyelids*?

## Brenton's Translation of the Septuagint

### Version examined:

### Summation:

Brenton gives us the Greek Septuagint in the middle columns, and on the outer column, translates the Greek into older (but not **Olde**) English. For those who study the Old Testament from the Greek, his translation is a Godsend, as the Septuagint was not rendered in the Koine Greek, rendering many of our Lexicons useless.

### Preface:

**Translation:** Brenton's Translation of the Septuagint

**Translators:** Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** Old Testament and Septuagint

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:** For one man, this can be a very uneven translation. An example: in 2Sam. 20:1, the Hebrew has *a son of belial*; the Greek has *a son of pestilence*; and Brenton renders this *transgressor*. This same word, he renders *pestilence* back in 1Sam. 1:16. For the most part, Brenton does appear to try to properly translate the Greek Septuagint literally.

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** None

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The Promise (the Contemporary English Version)

### Version examined:

**Summation:** The CEV is possibly the most *imaginative* and *freely-translated* of all the paraphrases. Although *The Promise* is theologically conservative, its translation is anything but. Of all the *thought-for-thought* translations, this is the freest rendering of the Hebrew language.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The Contemporary English Version, which entitled *The Promise*.

**Translators:** Very little was said about who did the actual translation of this version of Scripture. We don't know if we are talking about a handful of men, or an auditorium of scholars. See *my comments* below.

**Date of Translation:** This is copyrighted 1995 by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

**Stated Purpose:** In its preface, the CEV first quotes from the KJV's preface: *Translation it is that opens the window, to let in the light; that breaks the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that puts aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removes the cover of the well, that we may come by the water* ("Translation to the Reader" King James Version, 1611). To the CEV goes on to say that, while many translations have attempted to imitate and emulate the language of the KJV, the CEV *sought to capture the spirit of the King James Version by following certain principles set forth by its translators* [in this original preface].<sup>17</sup> What they attempted to achieve was *accuracy, beauty, clarity, and dignity* of the Bible; after all, as the translators of the KJV stated, "This is the Word of God, which we translate."

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The CEV bases its translation upon the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the fourth edition correction. The CEV manages to incorporate both the Greek and the Hebrew version of Judges 19:18. It follows the Greek in 1Chron. 1:51a, rather than the Hebrew (which is the most logical choice). The CEV follows the Hebrew of Job 15:30b, rather than the Greek, although it is a little hard to tell (the translators of the CEV tend to be very creative in their translation). **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the CEV follows the Hebrew, although they footnote the alternate reading. In Job 15:11–12, it is apparent that the translators took a little from the Hebrew, a little from the Greek, and a great deal from their own imagination. I am all for have a fairly easy-to-read version of Scripture, but it makes me leery when the translators, rather than possibly present something which is difficult to understand, choose to lean upon their own imagination instead.

Like many of the more recent translations, the CEV also made extensive use of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, taking their rendering over the later manuscripts. Deference was given to the Dead Sea Scrolls in passages e.g. 1Sam. 1:23–25.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** As mentioned above, there are times when a passage is not easily understood, and the translators appear to have reworded the passage pretty much from their imagination. Job 15:11–12 in the CEV reads: **And you have been offered comforting words from God. Isn't this enough? Your**

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<sup>17</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. vii. Whenever an extended bit of writing is in italics, you may assume that it came from the preface of the Contemporary English Version.

emotions are out of control, making you look fierce;... Compare and contrast this with Massoretic text and the Septuagint:

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint
15:11	[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?	You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash!	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?

This imaginative rendering of the text is sometimes beyond one’s imagination; for instance, Job 16:19–22 simply bears a resemblance to the original text:

Job	CEV	NASB	Greek Septuagint
16:19	Even now, God in heaven is both my witness and my protector.	“Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, And my advocate is on high.	And now, behold, my Witness is in heaven, and my Advocate is on high.
16:20	My friends have rejected me, but God is the one I beg	My friends are my scoffers; My eye weeps to God.	Let my supplication come to the Lord, and let my eye weep before Him.
16:21	to show that I am right, just as a friend should.	O that a man might plead with God As a man with his neighbor!	Oh that a man might plead before the Lord, even [as] the son of man with his neighbor!
16:22	Because in only a few years, I will be dead and gone.	For when a few years are past, I shall go the way of no return.	But my years are numbered and [their end] will come, and I will go by the way by which I will not return.”

God’s Word™, also a modern English translation, still matches the original text more often: “Even now, look! My witness is in heaven, and the one who testifies for me is above, the spokesman for my thoughts. My eyes drip [with tears] to God because in a few short years I will take the path of no return. But my witness will plead for a human in front of God. The Son of Man will plead for his friend!” [It is in poetic form in the God’s Word™; you will note that v. 22 is placed before v. 21].

This imaginative approach is found throughout this translation. There are innumerable times when the CEV gives us this oversimplified rendering when such a rendering is unnecessary.

	CEV	NASB	Greek Septuagint
1Sam. 2:2	"No other god is like you. We're safer with you than on a high mountain." <sup>18</sup>	"There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, Nor is there any rock like our God."	For there is none holy as the Lord; and there is none righteous as our God; there is none holy beside You.

Now and again, the CEV is just too simplistic, to the point of being irritating, even though it is not far from the original languages; some examples follow:

	CEV	NASB	NKJV
1Sam. 2:26	Each day the LORD and his people liked Samuel more and more.	Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor [lit., <i>was going on both great and good</i> ] both with the LORD and with men.	And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** The CEV translators used the Greek text which is *published by the United Bible Societies (third edition corrected and compared with the fourth revised edition)*.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** In I Cor. 12–14, *glōssa* (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is rendered *languages* rather than *tongues*. This is a reasonable and accurate translation; however, when referring to a portion of the human body, they render this word *tongue*.

**Portion Translated:** The Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** High school Freshman level.

**Grade Level:** Seems to be on a high school freshman level or even intermediate school level. This is not meant as an insult, as there is nothing wrong with having a relatively simple translation.

**Assumptions Made:** By their preface, it appears to be the assumption of the translators that we are dealing with the Word of God.

**Bias:** Because of our leanings in this society of a more gender-less society, the **CEV** took portions of Scripture which was gender-specific and made it gender-less. Their illustration: *The Greek text of Matthew 16:24 is literally, "If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The Contemporary English Version shifts to a form which is still accurate, and at the same time more effective in English. "If any of you wants to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me."*<sup>19</sup> Their term for this is *gender generic*. This will obviously be a sore-spot for some believers.

Probably the primary concerns of this Bible translation is *how does it read and how does it sound when read?* This is alluded to again and again in its preface. I know that some churches have a reading from Scripture as a part of their service. The **CEV** might serve well in that regard. What at first appears to be a secondary consideration was the formatting of the text—in doing so, their thought was to make the text visually easy to read aloud.

<sup>18</sup> The CEV translators footnote here that this is one possible rendering of the difficult Hebrew text; the Hebrew text was really not that difficult here.

<sup>19</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. x.

In general, unlike many of the modern translations, the **CEV** is very conservative in its theology. When giving a prediction of our Lord, the **CEV** reads: *But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel.* Many of the modern translations render *virgin* as *young woman* instead (which is really not so much of a sign). Their attendant notes to that verse tell us that *Immanuel* means *God With Us*. I wish they would have retained that for the New Testament, where the fulfillment of that verse is Matt. 1:23, which reads, in the **CEV**: *“A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be call Immanuel,” which means “God is with us.”* I believe that *God with us* is the stronger, more conservative rendering of *Immanuel*.

Also, let me quote from the preface: *The translators of the Contemporary English Version have not created new or novel interpretations of the text. Rather, it was their goal to express mainstream interpretations of the text in current, every-day English. To do so required listening carefully to each word of the biblical text, to the way in which English is spoken today, to the remarks of their reviewers, and especially to the Spirit of God.*<sup>20</sup>

I guess my point is, if you are of a conservative theological bend (which I am), you may not like individual verses and their too-free rendering, but you should have no trouble with the overall theology found in the **CEV**.

**Description of Translation:** This is strictly an interpretation and not a translation. Of all of the various translations which I examined, this one was the least literal. Sometimes, two and three verses are rendered as one, so that, not only do we not have the Hebrew rendered word-for-word, but there are times when we do not have even a verse-for-verse rendering (this is quite rare for a translation; the CEV is the only translation that I am aware of which does this). Verses are transposed, mixed together, and sometimes thoughts and portions of the text are left out entirely. There are times when the inference of the Hebrew is cannily made, and other times when meaning is inserted. Once and awhile, it softens the original Hebrew. In Judges 19:2, the Hebrew tells us that this Levite’s wife *committed adultery or fornicated* (with someone else) and then left him. The CEV reads that she was *unfaithful*. The more important consideration—that is, is this *adultery* really a part of God’s Word, is not mentioned in the CEV.

Let me give an example of meaning which was made absolutely clear in Ruth 3:17:

KJV *And she said, These six measures of barley gave he to me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.*  
 CEV *She also said, “Boaz gave me this grain, because he didn’t want me to come back without something for you.”*

Notice that what Ruth actually said was altered considerably, albeit the meaning is perspicuous. However, take note here that the KJV is not abstruse either.

Here are more Old Testament examples where the CEV acts more as a commentary than as a translation:

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 2:31	Behold, days are coming and I will cut off your strength and [the] strength of a house of your father from being an old man [or, <i>so that an old man is not</i> ] in your house.	Behold, the days come when I will destroy your seed and the seed of your father’s house.	The time will come when I will kill you and everyone else in your family. Not one of you will live to an old age.

<sup>20</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. xi.

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 9:9–10	Before, in Israel, so spoke a man when he went to inquire of God: “Come let us go to the seer” (for the <i>prophet</i> [of] today was formerly called a <i>seer</i> ). Then Saul said to his servant, “Your word [is] good—come, let us go.” So they went into the city where the man of God [was].	Now beforetime in Israel every one in going to inquire of God said, “Come and let us go to the seer;” for the people beforetime called the prophet, the seer. And Samuel said to his servant, “Well said, come and let us go.” And they went to the city where the man of God was.	“Great!” Saul replied. “Let’s go to the man who can see visions!” He said this because in those days God would answer questions by giving visions to prophets.  Saul and his servant went to the town where the prophet lived.
Observations	The traditional understanding of 1Sam. 9:9–10 has always required some commentary; the CEV sidesteps this issue by giving this passage a whole new sense. Does their translation make more sense? Absolutely. Is it more accurate? Not according to the manuscripts that we have.		
1Sam. 10:19	And you [all] the day [even you] have rejected your Elohim Who delivers you from all your evils and your adversities and so you say to Him, ‘For a king You will set over us.’ And therefore, present yourselves to faces of Y <sup>e</sup> howah to your tribes and to your thousands.”	And you [all] have this day rejected God, Who is Himself your Deliverer out of all your evils and afflictions; and you [all] said, ‘Nay, but you will set a king over us.’ And now stand before the Lord according to your tribes, and according to your families.”	God has rescued you from your troubles and hard times. But you have rejected your God and have asked for a king. Now each tribe and clan must come near the place of worship so the LORD can choose a king.
Observations	It is not clear from this passage exactly who chooses the king. Interpretation of what is actually occurring requires a great deal of speculation and examination, which I have done in the exegesis. The CEV has simply interpreted what occurred for us.		
Job 15:30	He will not turn aside from darkness; his shoot will dry up—a flame; and will depart in a wind his mouth.	Neither will he in any way escape the darkness; let the wind blast his blossom, and let his flower fall off.	They won’t escape the darkness, and the blazing breath of God will set their future aflame.
Psalm 10:11	He thinks in his heart, “God has forgotten [me]; He has hidden His face [from me]; He will not see [this] ever.”	For he has said in his heart, “God has forgotten; He has turned away His face so as never to look.”	They say, “God can’t see! He’s got on a blindfold.”
Psalm 10:12	Stand up, O Y <sup>e</sup> howah! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget [the] afflicted!	Arise, O Lord God; let Your hand be lifted up; do not forget the poor.	Do something, LORD God, and use your powerful arm to help those in need.



The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
Psalm 10:17	[The] desire of [the] afflicted [and humble ones] You have heard, O Y <sup>e</sup> howah; You cause to establish their heart; You will incline Your ear...	The Lord has heard the desire of the poor; Your ear has inclined to the preparation of their heart...	You listen to the longings of those who suffer. You offer them hope, and you pay attention to their cries for help.
Observations	Their take on the verses in Psalm 10 help to explain a relatively difficult passage of Scripture. Are they on the mark when it comes to their interpretation? I don't know. The traditional understanding of 1Sam. 9:9–10 has always required some commentary; the CEV sidesteps this issue by However, for reading aloud or at home, it is something which you should be able to live with.		

Now and again, we have an instance where another modern translation has done a much better job with translating a passage.

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	TEV	CEV
1Sam. 1:1	And so he was a man, one, from the Ramathaim-zophim from hill country of Ephraim and his name, Elkanah ben Jeroham ben Elihu ben Tohu ben Zuph, an Ephraimite.	There was a man named Elkanah, from the tribe of Ephraim, who lived in the town of Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham and grandson of Elihu, and belonged to the family of Tohu, a part of the clan of Zuph.	Elkanah lived in Ramah, a town in the hill country of Ephraim. His great-great- grandfather was Zuph, so Elkanah was a member of the Zuph clan of the Ephraim tribe. Elkanah's father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, and his great- grandfather was Tohu.
<i>Ben</i> , in the Hebrew, means <i>son of</i> . Note how clean as well as well as how logical the TEV is here as compared to the CEV.			

The Greek, although an easier language to render into the English, is sometimes perverted by the CEV. That is, meaning which was not intended is inserted. I Cor. 14:15 is, literally: **What then is it? I will pray with [or, by means of] the spirit, but I will also pray with the mind. I will sing with the spirit, but I will also sing with the mind.** The CEV, which differs from pretty much the other 25+ translations here, is rendered: **Then what should I do? There are times when I should pray with my spirit, and times when I should pray with my mind. Sometimes I should sing with my spirit, and at other times I should sing with my mind.** This, unfortunately obscures the argument of Paul, who, in this passage, maintains that one should be praying in the spirit and with understanding **at the same time**,<sup>21</sup> rather than at different times, which is what the CEV says.

One common trait of many of the more recent translation is the combining of verses. That is, rather than render v. 26 and then render v. 27, the CEV often will render the two together as one verse, intermingling the verses in order to get an easier to read passage; some examples follow:

<sup>21</sup> This is covered in great detail in my study of the gift of tongues.

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	NASB	CEV
1Sam. 1:24–25	And so she took him up with her as which she weaned him in bulls of three [years] [or, <i>three bulls</i> ] and an ephah—one— of flour and a skin of wine. And so she brought him [to] a House of Y <sup>e</sup> howah [in] Shiloh and the child was a child. And so they slaughtered the bull and so they brought the child unto Eli.	Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the in Shiloh, although the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli.	When it was the time of year to go to Shiloh again, Hannah and Elkanah took Samuel to the LORD's house. They brought along a three-year-old bull, a twenty-pound sack of flour, and a clay jar full of wine. Hannah and Elkanah offered the bull as a sacrifice, then brought the little boy to Eli.
You will note how smooth the CEV is, and how much more reasonable the rendering is of the items brought with them to worship.			

One interesting note for me: I expected that the translation of the CEV to lean toward the charismatic interpretation. Whereas some modern translations (e.g., the NRSV, the REB, the NAB and the NJB) have Saul falling into some ecstatic trance in 1Sam. 10:10, he simply begins prophesying in the CEV (which is how it reads in the Hebrew). In the famous I Cor. 14 passage, Paul discourages the believers from bursting out with speaking in languages that they have not learned (i.e., *the gift of tongues*). There is no indication in this passage in the CEV that the congregation is speaking in total gibberish (i.e., *the tongues of angels*); it references, as does the Greek, the speaking of a known language that the speaker himself has not learned.

**Capitalization:** The pronouns associated with deity are not capitalized; there are some instances where a Messianic prediction is not appropriately capitalized (e.g., Isa. 7:14).

**Order of Translation:** The CEV follows the standard KJV order.

**Strong Points:** Although this is translated at a rather low academic level, this is a **very** readable and easy-to-understand translation.

If you are a fundamentalist Christian, as I am, you will find very little in this translation which will contradict what you believe. However, you should never quote from the CEV in order to prove a point, because what someone else has in their translation could be very different.

There are passages which are reasonably and clearly rendered which do not stray too far from the original. For example:

	CEV	NASB	NKJV
1Sam. 18:19	But when the time came for David to marry Saul's daughter Merab, Saul told her to marry Adriel from the town of Meholah.	So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.	But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

One Hebrew idiom which translators struggle with is *and it came to pass* (which is simply the verb *to be* often as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect). The CEV very neatly conveys the meaning of the verb and updates the phrase as well.

**Weak Points:** I would not use quotations from this translation of the Bible to support or disparage a controversial Biblical doctrine. There are specific instances (I Cor. 14:15 was already cited) where CEV's translation is in flat-out opposition to the original Greek.

One of the Old Testament passages, which clearly teaches the trinity, is obscured slightly by the CEV. *Young's Literal Translation* reads: *Come ye near unto me, hear this, Not from the beginning in secret spake I, From the time of its being, there am I, And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me and His Spirit* (Isa. 48:16). The CEV reads: *Come closer and listen! I have never kept secret the things I have said, and I was here before time began. By the power of his Spirit the LORD God has sent me...* It's there, but you have to look more closely to see it (and, the way it is tied to the next verse obscures it just a bit more).

There are times when the CEV can be inaccurate very misleading. One example is 1Sam. 7:1–2: *The people of Kiriath-Jearim got the chest and took it to Abinadab's house, which was on a hill in their town. They chose his son Eleazar to take care of it, and it stayed there for twenty years. During this time everyone in Israel was very sad and begged the LORD for help.* The Ark **did not** remain in Kiriath-jearim for *only* 20 years. The would have compressed approximately 60 years of history (and 30 chapters of Scripture) into 20 years.

The names of God are sometimes obscured by the CEV. For instance, *the Lord of Hosts* or *the Lord of the Armies* is not found in the CEV, although it occurs 235 times in the Old Testament, it does not occur in the CEV; we find, instead, *the Lord All-Powerful*. Now, that is a nice title, but it is not the title found in the Hebrew.

**Criticisms:** There were many instances, particularly in the poetry sections of Scripture, where the translators leaned more toward their own imagination than they did toward anything else. There are even a few instances where the similarity between the CEV translation and the original text appeared to be only coincidental. Let me offer some examples:

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
Psalm 10:15	Break [the] arm [or, strength] of the wicked and [the] evil [one]; You seek out his evil—You do not find [it] [or, You find none].	Break the arm of the sinner and wicked man; his sin will be sought for and you will not find [it].	Now break the arms of all merciless people. Punish them for doing wrong and make them stop.
Psalm 44:16	Take a stand—[be] a help for us and ransom us on account of Your grace.	Arise, O Lord, help us, and redeem us for Your name's sake.	Do something! Help us! Show how kind you are and come to our rescue.
Psalm 106:32	And they cause wrath by the waters of Meribah, And it is evil to Moses for their sakes,...	They provoked him also at the water of Strife, and Moses was hurt for their sakes;...	At Meribah Spring they turned against you and made you furious. [you, by the way, refers to God here]

One problem with many of the oversimplified versions of Scripture is that they sound lame, particularly when conveying a message directly from God. Some examples follow:

The Passage	Moderately Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 3:14	“And therefore, I swear to the house of Eli [that] the iniquity of Eli’s house will not be atoned for, either by a sacrifice or by an offering ever.”	And so, I have sworn to the house of Eli, the iniquity of the house of Eli shall not be atoned for with incense or sacrifices forever.	I warned Eli that sacrifices or offerings could never make things right! His family has done too many disgusting things.
1Sam. 5:7	And the men of Ashdod saw how [the matter] stands, they said, “The Ark of the God of Israel will not remain with us, for His hand has been heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god.”	And the men of Azotus saw that <i>it was</i> so, and they said, “The Ark of the God of Israel will not abide with us, for His hand <i>is</i> heavy upon us and upon Dagon our God.”	Finally they said, “The God of Israel did this. He is the one who caused all this trouble for us and our god Dagon. We’ve got to get rid of this chest.”
1Sam. 7:1–2	So the men of Kiriath-jearim came and they took up the Ark of Y <sup>e</sup> howah and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. Furthermore, they consecrated Eleazar, his son, to keep the Ark of Y <sup>e</sup> howah. So the Ark was, from the day of [its] lodging, in Kiriath-jearim; and the days increased and they became twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after Y <sup>e</sup> howah.	And the men of Cariathiarim come, and bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; and they bring it unto the house of Aminadab in this hill; and they sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. And it came about from the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim that the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.	<p>The people of Kiriath-Jearim got the chest and took it to Abinadab’s house, which was on a hill in their town. They chose his son Eleazar to take care of it and it stayed there fore twenty years.</p> <p>During this time everyone in Israel was very sad and begged the LORD for help.</p>

The biggest problem with the CEV is that there are places where the translation is just flat out false or misleading. Some examples follow:

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 13:10a	And it was as he finished offering the burnt offering that, observe, Samuel arrived.	And it came to pass when he had finished offering the whole-burnt-offering, that Samuel arrived.	...and just as he was placing it [the burnt offering] on the altar, Samuel arrived.
Saul had actually completed offering this burnt offering when Samuel arrived, which was the problem. In the CEV, he was just about to make this offering.			

Let me point out, in this criticism, that if you do not understand your translation of a particular passage, there are times when the CEV will explain that passage and explain it accurately (and, of course, there are times when its interpretation is inaccurate as well). Again, this should not be your first Bible or your main Bible, and this is not a translation to depend upon for difficult theological interpretations, concepts and discussions.

**Their Comments:** *The Contemporary English Version has been described as an “user-friendly” and a “mission-driven” translation that can be read aloud without stumbling, heard without misunderstanding, and listened to with*

*enjoyment and appreciation, because the language is contemporary and the style is lucid and lyrical.*<sup>22</sup> Their earliest drafts were sent to a variety of Biblical scholars and theologians from several different denominations for their comments, as well as to all the English-speaking Bible Societies, as well as to over forty United Bible Societies translation consultants throughout the world. Several times in their preface, they emphasize the importance of this translation being one which one would listen to being read aloud, and how attuned their translators were to this translation from an auditory standpoint. In other words, they were looking for this version to be easy to read aloud and easy to listen to when read from.

*And: Each translation is, in its own right, the Word of God, yet each translation serves to meet the needs of a different audience. In this regard, the Contemporary English Version should be considered a companion—the mission arm—of traditional translations, because it takes seriously the words of the apostle Paul that “faith comes by hearing.”*

**Layout:** This is the only translation that I am aware of which uses, to its advantage, watermarks to denote what book we are in. Like many modern translations, poetry looks like poetry, prose looks like prose. The CEV employed the two-column format with notes at the bottom of each page. It is the most pleasantly formatted of all the translations.

They do sort of an odd thing with quotes. If there is a moderately long quote, then often quotation marks are not used, but the quote is indented. Now this is not a bad idea, as we often find quotes within quotes within quotes in Scripture. However, this will be mixed in with the use of quotation marks for those who are conversing or answering, but whose remarks are but one verse. Narrative is not indented. However, we run into problems of consistency now and again. In 1Sam. 12, for instance, Samuel is giving a speech to the Israelites. No part of his speech has quotation marks and it is all indented. The people occasionally are called upon to respond. Their response is also indented, but with appropriate quotation marks. However, in vv. 18–19, we have a short amount of narrative, followed by speaking. None of that is indented. My point is, it is difficult to be consistent with this approach—however it is not a bad idea for extended quotes, particular for those passages where we have quote within a quote within a quote (which are surprisingly frequent in Scripture). It is not that disconcerting, as I had owned and used my own copy of CEV for a couple of years before I even noticed this minor inconsistency.

Now, despite all of this fancy layout and the options available to the translators, they fall short in many areas. The psalms have titles and they also have parenthetical information which is properly formatted (like so many translations do, including the KJV). However, there are areas where such formatting should be applied, and is not. In the first nine chapters of 1Chronicles, we have a list of various genealogies. Each of these is properly titled in the original and at least one of them (Reuben's) has a parenthetical statement as we find in the psalms. However, the CEV translators do not appear to be aware of this and they must add a great deal of additional verbiage to make the first couple words of 1Chron. 5:1 blend in with that which follows. Furthermore, that which is parenthetical and would have been better served in italics or smaller print right below the title, is not properly reformatted in any such way. If we are going to go with modern text formatting, then we should allow for Scripture to lead us to do it correctly and consistently.

**Section Headings:** The section headings in *The Promise* are in large, bold, italicized print, so the it stands out from the text. All of the Bible translations, this is probably the most appealing to the eye and the easiest to read.

**Footnotes:** The footnotes each note the verse or verses from which they are taken in boldface, so it is easy to go from the text to the footnote and from the footnote to the text.

Like several versions of Scripture, at the bottom of each page we find footnotes which are designed to give us some background and/or understanding of the passage referred to. Whereas I frequently quote or expand upon Scofield's notes, and make occasional use of the notes of the NIV Study Bible in my exegetical studies, I rarely refer to or use the CEV's footnotes. I judged them to be of only moderate help.

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<sup>22</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. vi. This is also found again on p. viii.

**Personal Comments:** Most of these various translations submit their work to various scholars throughout the world. How much attention these scholars give to their early efforts is unknown. How much weight their comments bear on the final draft is also unknown. Having been on several textbook committees, the time that some people devote to such a task, even when it impacts them directly, is sometimes quite brief; and those who do spend their time in careful review of the material are occasionally ignored. This is not a personal attack upon the translators of the **CEV**—as almost all translations go through this process—I just want you to recognize that it often sounds better on paper than one finds in real life practice. The responsibility for the strength of a translation falls more upon the shoulders of its translators than it does upon those who review said translation.

A second item of note is the appearance of this translation. At first, I thought that they simply made use of some of the nifty tricks of word processing (e.g., watermarks). However, on closer examination, the text was intentionally printed in such a way as to make it easier to read aloud. The example given was poetic text which is uncomfortably broken up primarily because of the often-used two column layout found in most translations. The **CEV** is a one-column work, where quotations, poetry and prose are all set apart in a pleasant and easily read-from format. In fact, of the Bibles which I have examined, the **CEV** translators probably pay more attention to format than any other set of translators (oddly enough, the only other translation wherein format plays such a big part is Rotherham’s *Emphasized Bible*, which is one of the most literal translations).<sup>23</sup>

The **CEV** makes a point here which I rarely hear: the power of the spoken Word of God. God has designated for His word to be spoken. There are certain of us who receive a great deal of our growth through the written word; however, the majority of people began learning God’s Word and growing spiritually through hearing His Word. Even though the majority of my learning comes through the written word today, I spent the first twenty years of my spiritual life having the Word of God taught to me verbally.

There are several key verses which are *watered-down* in various new translations of Scripture, e.g., Gen. 11:1 Job 14:14 Isa. 7:14 Micah 5:5 Matt. 16:18 John 1:42. The **CEV** retains the reasonable theological significance that we generally associate with these verses. Often, the power and punch of the **KJV** is missing, but that tends to be true of almost any translation, including the **NKJV**. What the **KJV** seemed to achieve more so than any other translation that I am aware of is a wondrous marriage between literature and translation.

Finally, as I have harped on throughout this review, the **CEV** leans too much towards the imagination of the translators than it does upon the original text. **God’s Word™**, also a modern translation, tends to match the original Hebrew more often, both in meaning and with respect to specific words. Whereas I do not find too many things to get into a theological huff about with the **CEV**, since the translators appear to be fundamental and historic in their theology, my main problem is that they stray too far and too often from what the original text is, and often without a valid reason for doing so.

I should also point out that, given their correct theological bias, their translation is sometimes very readable and very reasonable; some examples below:

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 2:34	And this [will be] to you the sign which will come unto two of your sons—unto Hophni and Phinehas, in a day one will die their two.	And this which will come upon your two sons, Ophni and Phinees, [this] will be a sign to you: in one day, both will die.	To prove to you that I will do these things, your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will die on the same day.

<sup>23</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. x.

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	CEV
1Sam. 3:11	And so said Y <sup>e</sup> howah unto Samuel, "Behold, I am doing a word in Israel which all hearing him will tingle his two ears.	And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I execute my words in Israel; whoever hears them, both his ears will tingle.	The LORD said: Samuel, I am going to do something in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it!
	<i>Ears tingling</i> is certainly the most accurate rendering (and this is how most of the literal versions render this verse), but it is not really very helpful to the reader.		
Psalm 44:10	You have caused us to turn back from [our] enemy; and the ones who hate us plunder [and pillage and loot us] for themselves.	You have turned us back before our enemies; and they that hated us spoiled for themselves.	You made us retreat, and our enemies have taken everything we own.

On the other hand, this English version is filled with passages that lack a compelling translation. Whereas, the KJV is a work of literature, with is compelling and stirring, you come across passages in the CEV which are, quite frankly, *lame* or *weak*. Some examples below:

The Passage	Moderately Literal Hebrew	NLT	CEV
1Sam. 17:36	"Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear and so will be [the end] of this uncircumcised Philistine, for he defies the ranks of the Living God [or, <i>Elohim</i> ]."	I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God!	Sir, I have killed lions and bears that way, and I can kill this worthless Philistine. He shouldn't have made fun of the army of the living God!

**Additional Features:** After the preface, there is a list of Bible promises, which is apropos, given the name of this translation. The notes on the various verses add commentary which deal more with the translation (which I find helpful) rather than with the interpretation of Scripture. My thinking here is that their attempt was to make explaining the meaning of any given verse unnecessary. At the end of this translation, we have a reasonable dictionary of Biblical terms and names as well as an excellent chronology table.

At the beginning of each book, rather than an outline they have **A Quick Look At This Book** followed by a bulleted list which amounts to a simple outline (or, better, a listing of headings). Given that this book is written at a lower level, I would imagine that some readers would look at an outline and gloss over. They didn't like them in school and certainly don't like them in their Bible. Furthermore, there are many schools which no longer even teach how to outline (in case you were not aware, essay organization is taught by graphical organizers instead). A bulleted list would be found by such a one to have greater appeal and therefore it would be more likely read. I believe that this is an excellent approach. After all, a feature which is not used is worthless.

**Recommendation:** I personally found this to be a very readable translation, and a handy backup when stumped by the meaning of this verse or that. However, I would not ever turn to this translation solely to determine the meaning of a particular passage. This would never be my primary Bible; but, then again, I am more academically inclined than the average person. For a young person, for a gift, as an introduction to Scripture, this might be the ideal choice. If you read portions of Scripture to your children at night, this would be one of the better choices (along with the NLT or the TEV). If you want just one modern English Bible, this could be it, although I would choose the NLT instead.

There is an additional consideration—I have found this Bible for sale at extremely inexpensive prices for the paperback version, which, thus far, has seemed to be relatively sturdy (I have had binding separate on much more expensive hardcover editions of other books, whereas I have not experienced any binding problems with my particular paperback CEV). If you are looking for an inexpensive additional version (theological scholars tend to lack large expense budgets), or if you need to purchase a quantity of modern English Bibles, for whatever reason, and your funds are limited, then this might be your best choice, all things considered.

**Additional Notes:** The appearance of the book is the match the kind of writing which was done. That is, poetry looks like poetry, and prose like prose. There are watermarks and other fancy word processing things which were done to make this visually appealing.

The translators add a general word of gratitude at the end of their preface to all of the Biblical scholars which have gone before. The body of Christ is one and we do not live or die to ourselves. Few believers realize how much they owe to generations which have gone before us. I personally appreciated seeing such a heart-felt acknowledgment in print.



## The Complete Jewish Bible

### Version examined:

#### Summation:

An attempt has been made to make the New Testament more *Jew-friendly* than other translations. The rationale being, *the New Testament is written by Jews, therefore it should sound as though it was written by Jews*. The Old Testament seems to be added as an afterthought.

### Preface:

#### Translation: The Complete Jewish Bible

**Translator:** David H. Stern

**Date of Translation:** Completed and published the Jewish New Testament in 1989. The entire Bible was finished and published by 1998.

**Stated Purpose:** The first and foremost purpose of this translator was *to restore the unified Jewishness of the Bible, and, particularly, to show that the books of the New Covenant are Jewish through and through*. What is lacking in all of the modern English translations of Scripture is one which is fundamentally Jewish. The author, a Jew converted over to Christianity, originally began putting together a Jewish New Testament Commentary; however, he spent so much time focusing on what he did not like about other English translations in his commentary, that he finally translated the New Testament from the Greek into an *informal yet respectful* translation. One stated purpose was the fact that the New Testament was a Jewish document which was never really treated as such. Therefore, he was motivated to put together a translation which was Jewish in its nature. He first completed the Jewish New Testament, and then spent another three years working on his commentary. He was pressed by many to also translate the Old Testament. At this time, he had become older, and did not have the same driving motivation to show that the Old Testament was essentially a Jewish document, and therefore really did not want to translate the entire Old Testament. He tried several approaches at first—finding an Old Testament with a Jewish slant to combine with his (English translations defer at times to the Septuagint, which defeated Stern's purposes). This didn't work out. He found one (the old Jewish Publication Society version) which had gone into public domain, and initially had planned on changing the *thou's* to *you's*, etc., but it just wasn't that simple. He finally ended up paraphrasing this version, occasionally translating certain versions directly from the Hebrew of the Massoretic text into English. Stern also made use of several English versions of the Old Testament to help him find the right wording. In short, the Old Testament is a compromise between a translation and a paraphrase, whereas the New Testament is translated directly and in its entirety from the Greek manuscripts.

Secondarily, Stern wanted a translation which was easy, if not enjoyable, to read, *flowing easily from the page into the mind and heart, unimpeded as much as possible by the differences between the environment of the Bible and that of the present*.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Stern depended first and foremost upon a 1917 English translation of the Old Testament known as the Jewish Publication Society version (JPS), and secondly upon the Massoretic text. According to his preface, he did not use the Greek Septuagint, which is generally the case (e.g., Job 15:30). *The Complete Jewish Bible* leaves it in, but separates v. 51, as is should. V. 51b begins a new paragraph. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the Complete Jewish Bible follows the Hebrew (as we would expect).

## Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** Stern translated from the Greek manuscripts.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is simply rendered *tongue(s)* throughout the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** At times, this is a very homey, informal, easy to understand version of Scripture. However, those who are not familiar with Jewish names will be put off by it. For instance, Yochanan (John) 2:13–14 reads: **It was almost time for the festival of Pesach in Y'huddah, so Yeshua went up to Yerushalayim. In the Temple grounds he found those who were selling cattle, sheep and pigeons, and others who were sitting at tables exchanging money.** Those brought up in a Jewish home who have come to recognize Yeshua as their Savior, will greatly appreciate this translation.

**Grade Level:** Apart from the Jewish transliterations, this is appropriate for a high school Freshman or Sophomore.

## Assumptions Made:

**Bias:** Obviously, by the name, *The Complete Jewish Bible*, and its inclusion of the New Testament—this would indicate that this is going to be a Bible with a Christian slant and undertones of Jewishness (but not of Judaism).

## Description of Translation:

### Capitalization:

**Order of Translation:** The Old Testament is the more traditional Jewish ordering of the books, with the books of Moses being first (the Torah), the prophets (the Neviim) (which are split into two sections: the early and the later prophets, and the writings (the Kethuvim) (which itself can be broken down into three sections: the Psalms, Proverbs and Job; the Five Scrolls—the Song of Solomon, and the books of Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; and the final writings of the Old Testament—Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles). The New Testament is as you would find it anywhere else.

**Strong Points:** I like the idea of doing Old Testament passages which are quoted in the New Testament in boldface. They stand out and sometimes call one's attention to the foundation of the New Testament (there is hardly a single page where there is not at least one Old Testament quotation in the New Testament). Also, in most Bible's, the proper names tend to be "Greek-a-sized." In the Jewish Bible, they remain Jewish-sounding. A person who has been brought up in a Jewish home will have a strong appreciation for the traditional use of the proper nouns transliterated from the Hebrew rather than from the Greek.

Now, below I will list a few passages which could have been rendered more accurately. However, there are *problem passages* which the **Complete Jewish Bible** gets right (i.e., there are passages where there is the liberal rendering of the passage, given by several, but not all, of the newer modern English translations; and there is the more conservative approach, which not only reflects the correct theological stance, but a more accurate translation of the passage as well). The **Complete Jewish Bible** was fine in its translation of Job 19:25–26 Psalm 45:6 118:26 Isa. 9:6 48:16 53:9 Zech. 12:10 Mal. 3:1.

Now and again, a passage is more or less rendered correctly. What happens in many translations, particularly the more modern ones, is that passages are dumbed-down in order to reach the hoi polloi. If the meaning is complex, then it is made simple. For instance, Psalm 19:13 deals with David praying for God to deliver him from the commission of acts of arrogance so that he may be acquitted of great transgression. The **Complete Jewish Bible** renders this: **Also keep your servant from presumptuous sins, so that they won't control me. Then I will be**

blameless and free of great offense. Although not an *inspired* translation here, it rendered this verse generally better than most (for instance, than the NLT, TEV and God’s Word™).

**Weak Points:** In his paraphrasing, Mr. Stern occasionally misses a point or two. In I Cor. 13:1–3, there is a build-up in each verse. Paul plays a trump card or ups the ante in each verse, which Stern catches in vv. 1 and 3, but misses in v. 2. Those without a Jewish background may be put off by the change from Greek transliterated names to Hebrew transliterated names.

Stern did not given a great deal of time to the translation of the Old Testament, and, at times, it shows.<sup>24</sup> For instance, 1Chron. 6:31 clearly breaks from the previous passage and should be tied to the names which follow. The **Complete Jewish Bible** makes the mistake of attaching this verse (and some which follow) to the previous list of names (of all the translations which I have examined, I believe that this is the only translation which makes this particular mistake).

**Criticisms:** As I began to look up key passages, I was less than happy. For instance:

The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		Scofield’s KJV
<p>I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart has become like wax—it melts inside me; my mouth is as dry as a fragment of a pot, my tongue sticks to my palate; you lay me down in the dust of death. Dogs are all around me, a pack of villains closes in on me like a lion [at] my hands and feet.</p>	<p>Psalm 22:15–16</p>	<p>I am poured out like water, and all my bone are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicket have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> Although this passage is mostly translated well, the last line is not. I have confirmed with Young’s Literal Translation that the KJV got it right; the <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> did not.</p>		
The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		NASB
<p>Goodness and grace will pursue me every day of my life; and I will live in the house of <i>ADONAI</i> for years and years to come.</p>	<p>Psalm 23:6</p>	<p>Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> There is a lot of different between <i>for years and years to come</i> and <i>forever</i>.</p>		
The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		NASB
<p>Therefore <i>Adonai</i> himself will give you people a sign: the young woman will become pregnant, bear a son and name him, ‘Immanu El [God is with us].</p>	<p>Isa. 7:14</p>	<p>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [which is unfortunately footnoted, <i>God is with us</i>]</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> In the addendum, I have discussed the rendering of <i>virgin</i> vs. <i>young girl</i> in this passage; simply put, it is not much of a sign when a young girl gets pregnant—even in the ancient world. The second problem, with both translations in fact, is the insertion of the verb <i>is</i>; that is inserted by interpretation, but it is not an accurate translation. <i>Immanuel</i> should be translated as <i>God with us</i>.</p>		

<sup>24</sup> Now, I fully understand that there are only so many hours in a day, and that it is unlikely that Stern would have been able to complete this translation had he given the Old Testament the same attention that he gave the New. He, in fact, apologizes up front in the introduction, for not being able to take enough time to work with the Old Testament. Nevertheless, I still have to deal with the finished product in this examination.

The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		NASB
<p><b>“The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him ‘Immanu El.’”</b> (The name means, “God is with us.”)</p>	Matt. 1:23	<p>“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “God with us.”</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> The NASB redeems itself with the New Testament quote of this passage. However, the <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> only improves things by properly quoting the Old Testament and rendering one of the two key words as <i>virgin</i>.</p>		
The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		KJV
<p>Although he had done no violence and said nothing deceptive, yet it pleased ADONAI to crush him with illness, to see if he would present himself as the guilt offering. If he does, he will see his offspring; and he will prolong his days; and at his hand ADONAI’S desire will be accomplished.</p>	Isa. 53:9b–10	<p>...because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put <i>him</i> to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see <i>his</i> seed, he shall prolong <i>his</i> days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> There is some justification for the rendering of the <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> here, according to <i>Young’s Literal Translation</i>.</p>		
The <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b>		NASB
<p>But you, Beit-Lechem near Efrat, so small among the clans of Y’hudah, out of you will come forth to me the future ruler of Isral’el, whose origins are far in the past, back in ancient times.</p>	Micah 5:2	<p>“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, <i>Too</i> little among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”</p>
<p><b>Comments:</b> You will note that it is clear in the NASB that we are speaking of the Messiah, whose time reaches back into eternity, but Who will be the future ruler of Israel. The reading of the <b>Complete Jewish Bible</b> allows for Him to be simply a ruler from the tribe of Judah, which goes way back into history.</p>		

There are additional passages that they could have done better with; e.g., Psalm 23:4 Micah 5:2

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry; prose like prose. Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are done in boldface, with the appropriate Scriptural reference.

**Section Headings:** None.

**Footnotes:** There are very few footnotes in the **Complete Jewish Bible**. Most of them in the New Testament simply refer back to whatever Old Testament passage has been quoted. I don’t recall seeing any footnotes in the Old Testament (again, recall that the author tells us that the work he did was really on the New Testament).

**Personal Comments:** I must admit that I was all set to really like this translation. However, I was disappointed because of its occasional liberal leanings. Portions of this Bible were done well and portions were not. I personally do most of my exegetical work in the Old Testament (at least, as of this writing), and Stern really did not set out to do his best work in the Old Testament (he does admit to this). His intention was to give more of a Jewish flavor to the New Testament, something which is generally lacking in most modern translations. I have not spent enough time in the New Testament to comment in greater detail.

However, if you want an Old Testament with a *Jewish slant*, try the JPS *Tanakh*, also called *The Jewish Bible*. This was a translation done specifically for Jews by Jews. Although it does not have a lot of the flavor of Stern's New Testament translation, it is still an outstanding translation on the whole (there are some isolated passages in the JPS which were rendered as per Jewish theological dictates). Surprisingly enough, a Christian believer will find the Jewish Bible more to his liking than the *Complete Jewish Bible*, despite the fact that the latter was produced by *Christians*.

**Additional Features:** This probably has the longest, yet the most interesting, of the prefaces of all the various translations (43 pages!). Throughout the translation itself, there are very few notes or references to other portions of Scripture. There appears to be an average of perhaps one note per page.

There is a glossary in back which helps the gentile identify any Jewish names that he does not recognize. There is a reverse glossary if there is a name that you are curious as to the Hebrew rendering of same.

There is a list of Old Testament passages which are quoted in the Old and in the New listed in the back.

There is also a listing of the festivals and where they are found mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments as well as some black and white maps at the end of this Bible.

It appears that the intended reader for this book is the Jew who has some sort of Judaic background (more than simply being born of Jewish extraction), but has converted to Christianity (although this translation would as easily work for a Jew who has become a Catholic as a Jew who has become a Baptist).

**Recommendations:** Insofar as the Old Testament goes, this is more of a curiosity than a translation which is necessary for you to locate and purchase.

**Additional Notes:**

## Rotherham's The Emphasized Bible

### Version examined:

#### Summation:

Although Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* has been described as *slavishly literal*, it is a translation which attempted to update the language found in the Bible, yet still adhere to some sense of literary standards (as did the KJV). It is generally accurate and literal. For today's readers, it will appear antiquated. It does draw from alternate readings much more often than most translations (particularly the Septuagint).

#### Preface:

**Translation:** *The Emphasized Bible*.

**Translator:** Joseph Bryant Rotherham. There are some who believe that only a committee should have the job of translating Scripture and that such an undertaking should not be given to one man. Au contraire, many of the best translations are the work of one very dedicated man. The committee approach allows for more variation of quality, as well as less consistency in the rendering of individual Hebrew words.

Rotherham's name, as well as his spelling and language (e.g., *Refrains in the Old Testament have been distinguished by italic type. These naturally abound in the Psalms; and there are few readers who will not be pleased to find them so made prominent throughout that favourite Book.*),<sup>25</sup> leave no doubt that Rotherham is very, very English.

**Date of Translation:** Rotherham apparently published his New Testament translation in 1872 and the Old Testament 1897–1902 (I don't know why there is a five year span here—perhaps he published a second or third revised version in 1902 or perhaps he released his translation of the Old Testament in pieces?).<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, my copy of *The Emphasized Bible* contains no dates which indicate when Rotherham put this translation together. And, prior to my knowing that Geisler and Nix mentioned him and gave the dates of his translation, I had originally guessed that Rotherham wrote 1900–1910, based upon his vocabulary and the dates of his source material.

**Stated Purpose:** Surprisingly enough, unlike most translations, Rotherham does not say *this is why I decided to translate the Bible into English*. He has a long preface or introduction where he lists some of the peculiarities of his translation—e.g., the size of the page, the name Yahweh, etc.—but he does not really state why he translated the Bible. You know what? I find that refreshing and lacking in pretense.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Rotherham leans cautiously toward the Hebrew Massoretic text. He used Hebrew instead of Greek (Judges 1:18 15:5 19:18 1Sam. 1:14 4:1b Job 15:30b). Although Greek is generally alluded to, it was not in Judges 1:18. In Judges 2:3 Job 14:16 15:4, 8, 29 20:2, 18, the translator went with the Greek rather than with the Hebrew. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, *The Emphasized Bible* tends to go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in that same passage. However, there are times that *The Emphasized Bible* simply follows the Massoretic text, as in 1Chron. 1:51a, which should be crossed out, despite the fact that it is a true statement (*The Emphasized Bible* does properly separate v. 51a from 51b, however). Of all the translations, Rotherham not only appears to be the least consistent with his preferred

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 438.

manuscripts, but he occasionally will follow the Hebrew when the Hebrew is clearly wrong. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; *The Emphasized Bible* follows the Hebrew. Although Rotherham often mentions the other manuscripts which were in existence in his day, for the obvious error of *30,000 chariots* that we find in 1Sam. 13:5, Rotherham does not footnote this to tell us that the Syriac and some Septuagint manuscripts have the number *3000* instead, and he stays with the incorrect *30,000* in his translation.

In fact, to be honest with you, it took me awhile before I figured out how Rotherham chose one text reading over the other, because he really shows no real preference between the Masoretic text and the Greek Septuagint. There are times when he chooses one over the other, footnoting simply, *So it shd be (w. Sep.)*, and then he simply moves on. However, what I believe to be the case is that he has allowed Dr. C. D. Ginsburg to be his textual critic, so wherever Dr. Ginsburg prefers the Hebrew, Rotherham goes with the Hebrew; and where Ginsburg follows the Greek (or, even the Latin for that matter), Rotherham follows the Greek. Ginsburg, whose writings come from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, appears to have exerted a very strong influence over Rotherham. So, Rotherham depended upon Dr. Ginsburg's work in the Old Testament and Drs. Westcott and Hort in the New. Rotherham is one of the very few translators to pay homage to the great work of these textual critics of years gone by. He points out that there is not enough time for any one man or group to first assemble and determine the manuscripts that one should use, and then set about the translation of the same. Few believers realize what a debt we have to those men who worked, guided by the Holy Spirit, to construct the best and most accurate original renderings of Scripture, striving always to attain the ideal of the **autographs**. God has great rewards for those faithful servants whose life was spent in preparation and then work to assemble an Hebrew and Greek text from which translators could work.

Specifically, Rotherham relied upon the revised Massoretic Text as edited by Dr. Ginsburg. Alternate readings were often referred to by Ginsburg and therefore, by Rotherham. For those who want a very short course in variant readings, allow me to quote from Rotherham's Introduction:

*A. Whence **come** these Various Readings? They are (i.) variations discovered in existing standard copies (Codices) or in early printed editions; (ii.) variations recorded in the Massorah itself as having formerly existed in documents now lost; (iii.) variations preserved in the Talmud or in the commentaries of ancient Jewish scholars; (iv.) variations proved by Ancient Versions, in cases where the changes cannot reasonably be attributed to freedom of translation, but assure us that the translators must have had before them a Hebrew Text materially differing from that which has been handed down to the present day.*<sup>27</sup> Rotherham goes on for two more pages to describe the characteristics and classifications of these variant readings. For those interested in this aspect of God's Word, Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* is a must-have.

All that being said, Rotherham depends too much upon alternate readings (because he depends upon Ginsburg), and, for this reason, there are many passages which I believe follow the wrong manuscript. However, generally speaking, when Rotherham strays from the MT, he footnotes it.

In some passages, e.g. Judges 16:13–14, where the MT is obviously missing text, Rotherham does not include it in his translation, but footnotes the entirety of the missing passage. The Septuagint does not include what appears to be repetitive text in Judges 18:17–18, but Rotherham does, adhering to the Massoretic text.

What would have been preferable is that Rotherham include alternate readings more consistently than he does. For instance, the MT has Goliath as being about 9 ft. tall; however the Septuagint has him as closer to 7 ft. tall. At least a footnote from Rotherham would be a reasonable and minimal expectation.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** Because there is a certain amount of leaning toward Old English (not nearly as much as the KJV), some may find this moderately difficult to follow. However, Rotherham took this work very seriously and has one of the best Old Testament translations that you can find.

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 18.

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** Rotherham had less to say about the New Testament manuscripts, citing the work of Westcott and Hort, and choosing their final manuscript over the others. Rotherham apparently used the Greek text provided by Tregelles for his first two editions and then that of Westcott and Hort for his third.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** In the New Testament, glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is simply rendered *tongue(s)* throughout. The gift of *interpretation of tongues* is the gift of *translation of tongues*.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Old English. This is an ancient translation just ripe for being updated, in both vocabulary, sentence structure, and with additional footnotes on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Grade Level:** Senior in high school or freshman in college. Rotherham does not pull any punches nor does he dumb down the material.

**Assumptions Made:** Rotherham, like any translator, bows to the authority of the textual critics upon whose shoulders he stands.

**Bias:** Rotherham, like most people who spend their lives with Scripture, is an evangelical Christian believer. It is hard to imagine anyone else putting this much effort into a translation (apart for the Jehovah's Witnesses, who are a breed unto themselves).<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, as I have worked with the Scripture and his translation, I would have a much more difficult time recognizing his bias as compared to that of *The Amplified Bible*.

**Description of Translation:** Although the word order is not often maintained, and although some odd second readings are occasionally found, this is the most literal translation next to Young's Bible. Like *Young's Literal Translation*, this translation also has too much Old English to recommend it for the average student of Scripture. For those, like myself, who study the Bible with a fervor, this and Young's translation are indispensable. Once and awhile, the Hebrew is softened somewhat. In Judges 19:2, the Hebrew reads that a Levite's wife *committed adultery or fornicated against him*, and Rotherham renders this *went astray against him*.

Like the very early translations which were not affected by recent trends (neutral gender references, the **charismatic movement**), Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* does not lean toward either of those influences. However, like almost all translations of that era, Rotherham does lean toward Elizabethan patterns of speech.

**Capitalization:** Rotherham does not capitalize the pronouns referring to God.

**Order of Translation:** Same as the KJV.

**Strong Points:** When it comes to getting a variety of readings, *The Emphasized Bible* is the place to go. *Emphasis*, in other languages, is done much differently than it is done in the English. What Rotherham does is give us an idea as to what words and phrases were greatly emphasized by the original author by using a system of pointy brackets (like a vector in mathematics) and single and double line pairs (like absolute values and the norm of a vector in mathematics). The system is simple enough to understand without having to study the preface, whereas, the system employed by *The Amplified Bible*, which provides us with additional meanings and nuances, is less intuitive.

One point which I did not appreciate until reading the preface was that the size of each page was made larger. Although the reason given that one could view all in one place such things as the entirety of Luke 15 on one page (which seemed not that important to me), it allowed for differences of style to be manifested. That is, if a passage seemed to break out in poem or song, the size of the page allowed for that to be visually illustrated. There are several places where a speaker or writer speaks a parallelism which would be lost in the way prose is usually set in type. Rotherham carefully deals with these instances. Also, if a person is speaking, Rotherham shows this with

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<sup>28</sup> Their translation, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, is found below, in alphabetical order..



position and indentation rather than with quotation marks (you may not realize it, but there are many places throughout Scripture where we deal with a quotation within a quotation within a quotation). This helps to alleviate some of the resulting confusion.

Rotherham also notes, by various type sets, the three different Hebrew words behind the word *God*. This is found as God, GOD, or *Ꝥ* in Rotherham's translation.

One nice touch is that in the introduction, Rotherham goes the extra mile and takes us by the hand and tells us *why* certain words and phrases are considered to be emphasized in the original language.

**Weak Points:** The vocabulary is very much a product of Old English, and will get on the nerves of anyone who dislikes the KJV. There are features which make Rotherham's translation excellent for scholarly study; however, if you are looking simply for a Bible to read and understand—this is not it.

Rotherham's translation can be very inconsistent in the realm of textual criticism. This does not mean that Rotherham disobeys the laws of textual criticism. One of the rules of textual criticism is, given two different readings, one should take the reading which makes the least sense. This is because, if an early copyist were to intentionally change a reading, then it would be from less logical to more logical. Rotherham often accepts the text of the Septuagint in one passage, yet does not do so in another—even neglecting to footnote the alternate reading.

Although Rotherham does offer variant readings, this translation was put together long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, so alternate readings from those scrolls will not be found in *The Emphasized Bible*. Secondly, not every important variant reading is found in this translation. So, for instance, even though Psalm 110:2 has a slightly different reading in the Aramaic and the Arabic (*You will rule in the midst of Your enemies*), Rotherham does not make note of that (and these translations were available to him). Now, so you don't misunderstand me, I am not trying to nitpick at Rotherham's work—for one man to have done this is extremely impressive and it reveals a great deal of dedication and single-mindedness. My point is, you cannot expect to find every important variant reading in Rotherham's translation. On the other hand, you will find more variant readings here than in any other translation that I am aware of. The NRSV comes in a far second to Rotherham.

**Criticisms:** I personally do not feel that Rotherham's translation packs the same punch, in a literary sense, as does the KJV (however, in my opinion, there is no modern translation which matches the KJV for its literary achievement).

#### **His Comments:**

**Layout:** The Scripture is in two columns with notes found below each column. By far, the majority of the notes deal with variant readings. Items which are emphasized in the original languages are emphasized in the English by the use of a variety of symbols, including < and >. Poetry more or less resembles poetry, and prose looks more like prose.

**Section Headings:** Rotherham marks off paragraphs or sections with the symbol § and then he numbers each paragraph as well. For instance, Mark, a book with 16 chapters, is broken down into 75 sections by Rotherham, numbered 1–75. The second heading can be brief or descriptive; and he sometimes lists parallel Scriptures.

**Footnotes:** Rotherham has more information on variant readings than any other Bible translation that I have examined. Some of the suggested alternate translations are archaic; however, you would not find all of these alternate readings anywhere else. Unfortunately, Rotherham's work was completed at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, long before the discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. What some enterprising believer needs to do is to update Rotherham's translation and, in addition, supply the variant readings from the **Dead Sea Scrolls**.

**Personal Comments:** For those who are serious students of the Word of God, I cannot over-emphasize how important obtaining this and *Young's Literal Translation* is. Once you get past his *Old English*, you will find that Rotherham's work will become one of the most important Bibles that you own.

What we lack today is a very literal rendering of Scripture which is in Modern English (although the NASB and God's Word™ are pretty close). I would think that one approach would be to take Rotherham's translation and simply update it; replace the *thee's* and *thou's* with *you's* and *your's*. On the other hand, if one were to do such an update, then one would need to be a bit more careful than Rotherham was when it comes to choosing one translation over another.

**Additional Features:** Rotherham includes several essays which we may find helpful. He tells us about the degeneracy of the heathen nations displaced by Israel in the days of Joshua; he also examines the genealogies in Scripture as well as the psalms in two short, separate essays, appropriately placed in Scripture. He also has a short essay on the Apocrypha. Also, at the end of both testaments, there is an appendix dealing with some of the important issues of Scripture—in the Old Testament, he discusses the authorship of Deuteronomy and the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. In the New Testament, there are quite a few more topics, each given less time.

**Recommendations:** For the studious Bible student, this version is a must.

**Additional Notes:** In his introduction, Rotherham goes into great detail about the specific Hebrew name of God and how this was lost to us. For those who have fallen prey to the Jehovah's Witnesses, and those who have lent them a sympathetic ear, this portion of Rotherham's Bible is recommended reading. For those who were not aware, there are serious questions about the name of God, Jehovah, which is found roughly 7000 times in the Old Testament. This would be a place to go for that information (Rotherham devotes seven pages of explanation to this).

## Keil & Delitzsch's Translation

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:** Keil and Delitzsch.

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** For the psalms, they followed the verse numbering found in the Hebrew rather than the Greek (so most psalms with inscriptions begin with v. 2). However, it is questionable whether they actually translated the inscriptions. In Psalm 44:inscription, we should have: [To the director \[of music\], a instructive psalm of the sons of Korah](#). What we have in Keil and Delitzsch is: [A Litany of Israel, Hard Pressed by the Enemy, and Yet Faithful to its God](#). So, where we would expect to find the inscription, what we find instead is a summary of the chapter.

**Portion Translated:** Old Testament.

**Vocabulary:** Moderately Old English. Slightly less so than the KJV, but more so than the NASB.

**Grade Level:** High school Junior.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** Theologically conservative.

**Description of Translation:** Fairly literal; reasonably easy to understand; still in Old Testament, however.

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:** More than any other translator, they will tell you why they translated it *this way* and not that.

**Weak Points:** They did not translate the entire Old Testament; one has to look for their translation at times.

**Criticisms:**

**Layout:**

**Their Comments:**

**Section Headings:** Not really. I cull the translation of Keil and Delitzsch from their 10 volume commentary. There is no actual complete translation by Keil and Delitzsch available—just whatever verses they correct.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The English Standard Version

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

This is a very readable translation, not quite word for word, but not a paraphrase either. Although supplied words are not italicized (which I see as its primary fault), 98% of the time, you are going to be reading an outstanding word-for-word rendering from the Hebrew and Greek into the English. This translation barely stays within the limits of being a literal translation (like the NRSV), but it is one of the best translations out there, rivaled only by the NKJV and the NASB.

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:**

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## God's Word™

### Version examined:

**Summation:** This is easily one of the best and overlooked modern-day translation. It generally strikes a nice harmony between the literal rendition of Scripture and an updated, modern rendering into English. Few translations can lay claim to having such a careful balance.

### Preface:

**Translation:** *God's Word™—Today's Bible translation that says what it means.* This is its name!

**Translators:** God's Word™ to the Nations Bible Society.

**Date of Translation:** Copyrighted 1995.

**Stated Purpose:** To present the Bible as if God had inspired a person who wrote in English to write Scripture. They call it a *closest natural equivalent translation*. Whatever the writer is attempting to say in Greek or Hebrew is then said in English, with an eye to readability (it is definitely not a word-for-word rendering, e.g., the KJV or *Young's Literal Translation*). According to them, whenever possible, the translators attempted to replicate and preserve the style of the original writer. This is, *unless* the writer had an extensive vocabulary and complex thought structure.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The Masoretic text as found in *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* is used for the basis of the translations of the Old Testament. Whenever they stray from that text, they footnote the deviation and list the various manuscripts which support their translation. They do make use of the relatively recently discovered [Dead Sea Scrolls](#).

They follow the Hebrew in Job 15:30. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; God's Word™ follows the Greek. **God's Word™** follows the Massoretic text in 1Chron. 1:51a. In 1Sam. 1:24, they follow the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Vulgate and the Syriac translation when they use *three-year-old bull* rather than *three bulls*, as is found in the Massoretic text. This appears to be the most reasonable translation. In 1Sam. 2:33, they also follow the DSS and the Septuagint rather than the Massoretic text by using the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular rather than the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular (which makes a great deal more sense in that passage). However, too often, there are occasions when they do not follow what is probably the correct reading. In that very same passage, 1Sam. 2:33, the Septuagint ends with the phrase *the sword of men* and the DSS ends with *the sword*. However, the Massoretic text only has *men*; **God's Word™** renders this as *the prime of life*, which is more or less in accord with the Hebrew. My point is that there is some inconsistency in their translation.

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** The translators also used the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* and footnoted deviations.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** The translators use the term *foreign languages* as opposed to *tongues*; the former being more accurate (see I Cor. 14).

**Portion Translated:** The Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** It appeared to be a Freshman high school level read.

**Grade Level:** High school freshman.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** The translators are clearly fundamentalist, evangelical believers, although that is not clearly stated in their preface. I don't say this as a dig or as an insult, just as an observation.

**Description of Translation:** Let me allow them to state what they did: *the theory followed by the Bible Society's translators is closest natural equivalent translation. The first consideration for the translators of GOD'S WORD™ was to find equivalent English ways of expressing the meaning of the original text. This procedure ensures that the translation is faithful to the meaning intended by the original writer. The next consideration was readability. The meaning expressed in natural American English by using common English punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and word choice. The third consideration was to choose the natural equivalent that most closely reflects the style of the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text. This translation theory is designed to avoid the awkwardness and inaccuracy associated with form-equivalent translation, and it avoids the loss of meaning and oversimplification associated with the function-equivalent translation.*<sup>29</sup> I must admit that they make a good argument for their theory of translation. Like most of the more modern paraphrases, **God's Word™** uses gender-neutral language.

The **charismatic movement** has infiltrated and affected many translations. They did not affect this translation. Instead of falling into a prophetic frenzy, Saul simply prophesies along with the other prophets in 1Sam. 10:10. Believers in I Cor. 14 are not speaking in ecstatic utterances, but in foreign languages that they themselves did not learn. All this is in keeping with the Hebrew and Greek of those respective texts.

**Capitalization:** the pronouns referring to deity are not capitalized, their reason being that sometimes it is unclear whether a pronoun refers to God or not—so this way, we can determine that for ourselves (this is kind of a goofy reason, considering that their purpose is to best convey what the writer had in mind when he wrote—such an approach involves interpretation).

**Order of Translation:** Traditional.

**Strong Points:** Some of **God's Word™** is very well done; I particularly liked the very beginning, Gen. 1:1 and following. Isa. 7:14, often a sore spot for most theologians, was rendered, reasonably well, for the most part (So the Lord himself will give you this sign: “**A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son and she will name him Immanuel [God Is With Us].**”). Matt. 1:23, which quotes this passage, is almost exactly the same wording. Passages which deal with the deity of Christ Jesus which are reasonably rendered: Psalm 45:6, 11 110:1 Isa. 9:6 Heb. 1:8–9. The literal bodily resurrection of the dead is correctly taught in Job 19:26. Messianic passages which deal with the cross are correctly rendered in Psalm 22:16. Isa. 53:9, which reports that the Messiah will both be assigned to His grave with the wicked and identified with the rich in his death, is reasonably translated. In some of the modern translations, Isa. 53:10 shies away from God bruising His Servant. However, **God's Word™** reasonably renders this: **Yet, it was the LORD's will to crush him with suffering. When the LORD has made his life a sacrifice for our wrongdoings, he will see his descendants for many days. The will of the LORD will succeed through him.** Some modern translations incorrectly separate the One speaking in Zech. 12:10 from the One Who has been pierced (or, *stabbed* in **God's Word™**). **God's Word™** correctly maintains in its translation that these are one and the same Person.

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<sup>29</sup> *God's Word™*, Word Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, p. xii.



One particular passage which many translations screw up is 1Sam. 7:2, which reads, in **God's Word™**: *A long time passed after the ark came to stay at Kiriath Jearim. For 20 years the entire nation of Israel mournfully sought the LORD.* What is good about their translation is, one does not read it and think that the Ark stayed in Kiriath-jearim for only 20 years, which would cause a great deal of confusion, since David takes the Ark out of Kiriath-jearim 60–100 years later.

One of the great verses of Old Testament Scripture is Isa. 48:16, where the speaker is the One Whose hand laid the foundation of the earth and stretch out the heavens (Isa. 48:13); then the speaker says, *Come here. Listen to this: From the beginning I have spoken nothing in private, From the time it took place, I was there. Now the Almighty LORD has sent me and his Spirit* (Isa. 48:16, **God's Word™**). That the trinity is taught in this passage is maintained by **God's Word™**.

In some modern translations, when David speaks of walking through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4), they translate that this valley is as dark as death, thus removing this psalm as a comfort to one while dying. However, in **God's Word™**, this is translated as *the dark valley of death*.

One criticism leveled against some modern English translations is that they bend the rendering just enough to make their translation palatable for Catholics (e.g., Matt. 16:18 in the NEB). **God's Word™** does not do that. In fact, in John 1:42, that *Peter* means *rock* or *stone* is obscured in **God's Word™**.

Other Scriptures which are problems in some modern English translations, but are rendered reasonably well by **God's Word™** are: Gen. 11:1 49:10 (*the scepter will never depart from Judah...until Shiloh comes*) Psalm 2:12 23:6 (where eternity is maintained as a real state of being) Micah 5:5 (the Messiah is aid to be our *peace*) Mal. 3:1.

What **God's Word™** generally does is provide us with a translation which is at once, very readable, yet faithful to the original. Some examples follow below:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	God's Word™
I Sam. 18:19	And so it is in a time, a giving of Merab, Saul's daughter, to David and she was given to Adriel the Meholathite to wife.	But it came to pass at the time when Merob, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Israel the Mothulathite to wife.	But when the time came to give Saul's daughter Merab to David, she was married to Adriel from Meholah.
One area of weakness in many translations is how they deal with <i>and it came to pass</i> , which is not even a good English rendering of the original (which is usually the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of the verb <i>to be</i> , which indicates a continuation of narrative. Although God's Word™ is pretty free-form with regards to that phrase, it updates the phrase in a reasonable manner (the CEV uses almost the same wording here).			
Psalms 10:15	Break [into pieces] the strength of the corrupt one and the evil one; You seek out his evil—you do not find [it].	Break the arm of the sinner and wicked man; his sin will be sought for and you will not find [it].	Break the arm of the wicked and evil person. Punish his wickedness until you find no more.

**Weak Points:** In Mal. 5:2, when speaking of the eternal nature of the Messiah to come, **God's Word™** puppies out, saying that his origins go back to *the distant past, to days long ago*. In the KJV of Mal. 3:1, the Lord Who comes into His temple is identified with the Messenger of the Covenant. In **God's Word™**, they sound like two different people.

A sore spot for some KJV aficionados is Psalm 69:21, where the KJV says [They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink](#). **God's Word™** reads instead: [They poisoned my food, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink](#). This is something which requires an exegetical study. Unlike the other passages quoted, this is not so easily dismissed as a right and wrong translation.

Individual passages are occasionally mistranslated, and without reason. Isa. 21:5 should read [Rise up, you princes, and anoint the shield \[with oil\]](#) (which helps to explain what is meant in 2Sam. 2:21); but it reads [Get up, you leaders! Prepare your shields for battle!](#) instead.

**Criticisms:** In Zech. 13:6, **God's Word™** properly teaches that the Messiah would be scarred in the house of his friends; however, it incorrectly says that the scarring would be on his chest rather than his hands.

One of my greatest criticisms of **God's Word™** is that it dumbs-down Scripture. In an effort to reach everyone with a limited vocabulary, it sacrifices the true meaning of a verse and inserts their own. Psalm 19:13 is a verse where David prays to God to keep him from committing acts of arrogance and pride so that he might be acquitted of great transgression. **God's Word™** reads: [Keep me from sinning. Do not let anyone gain control over me. Then I will be blameless, and I will be free from any great offense](#). Now, this does not bring the level down to an 8<sup>th</sup> grade vocabulary (which the TEV does), but it does reduce the reading level to below what it is in the original. I understand the reasoning for this, which is the reasoning behind almost all modern English translations: "Make the Bible readable." And this is fine—on the negative side, you lose information, you lose the individual styles and individual vocabulary (John is a very simple writer in the Greek—his ideas might be complex, but they are presented in very simple Greek—Greek that a first or second year Greek student could mostly translate; and Paul, on the other hand, has a very complex way of presenting his arguments, with a rich and varied vocabulary). Furthermore, not all of the Bible was designed to be immediately understood. I have been studying Scripture for several decades and I am still daunted by, say, the book of Ezekiel.

Generally, speaking **God's Word™** does not get too self-indulgent with its translation. That is, what you find in the English is not too far from what is in the Greek or Hebrew. However, once and awhile they take some liberties. One example would be Job 19:7:

<b>God's Word™:</b>	<b>Literal rendering of Hebrew:</b>
<a href="#">Indeed, I cry, 'Help! I'm being attacked!' but I get no response, I call for help, but there is no justice.</a>	<a href="#">Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' and I am not answered; I call aloud and there [is] no [proper] judicial verdict.</a>

Obviously, the translators of **God's Word™** did no great injustice to this passage; however, they did plunge further into interpretation than what they normally do.

Now and again, they make a change in the translation without noting that this is a variance from the manuscript they purport to followed. One example of this is 1Sam. 1:28 when they render a *they* when it should be a *he*. In my opinion, all of these changes should be footnoted.

Now, maybe this is just me, but I don't really care for the name of this translation: **God's Word™**—it just seems too self-indulgent. It would be like naming a translation the Bible™ or Scripture™. I would rather have seen them do something like what the New Living Translation did—they named their Bible, *The Open Bible*, but the translation is properly *the New Living Translation*.

**Their Comments:** *God's Word™ is unique among all Bible translations. Its [sic] the first—and only—major Bible translation to use the most widely accepted translation method employed around the world today. God's Word™ accurately presents all the meaning the original writers intended...unlike some modern translations, it contains no special "theological terms" passed down from earlier translations...God's Word™ uses natural, common*

language...just as the Bible's original writers did.<sup>30</sup> The *Reader's Guide* tell us that God, in His encounters with man, *has spoken clearly, plainly, and directly—using the common language of the people with whom he communicated.*<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the intention of this translation is to be clear, plain and direct.

Another possibly unique feature is that this translation employed both full-time Bible translators as well as English reviewers. The latter apparently would see to it that the final translation would read like contemporary American literature, following all the normal rules of grammar and punctuation, and it is printed in a single column format like most literature (and, *unlike* most Biblical translations).

In the preface, they gently rag on form-equivalent translation (also *inaccurately called literal translation*<sup>32</sup>), which would preserve much of the structure and order of the original language. However, this type of translation *can result in awkward, misleading, incomprehensible, or even amusing sentences.*<sup>33</sup> In the preface, they also mention the *function-equivalent translation*, (inaccurately referred to as paraphrasing—that's their comment), wherein *the translator tries to make the English function the same way the original language functioned for the original readers. However, in trying to make the translation easy to read, the translator can omit concepts from the original text that don't seem to have corresponding modern English equivalents. Such a translation can produce a readable text, but that text can convey the wrong meaning or not enough meaning. Furthermore, function-equivalent translations attempt to make some books readable on levels at which they were not intended. For instance, Song of Songs was not written for children. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is very sophisticated and not intended for novices.*<sup>34</sup> These are very good points that they make, by the way. I would have used the book of Romans or Hebrews as a better illustration of that which is not meant for the novice reader. To see what they did, read the **Description of Translation** above.

**Layout:** I must admit that this translation caused me to add the new category of layout, although I should have added it before. The Bible, with its too often used two-column format with Scriptural references in between or on both sides, looks more like a reference work than it does a work of literature. This translation looks like our English equivalent of the original would look—poetry looks like poetry, prose like prose; when someone is quoted, that signals a new paragraph, etc. Furthermore, when you open it up to any page, it looks like any book of literature. That is, if someone looked over your shoulder while you were reading this, they probably would not realize that you are reading a Bible unless they looked closely. This is certainly not in the same format as is found in the original languages; however, their contention is that, if God's spoke His Word directly to American man today, this is the format in which it would be composed.

I should also mention, more than poetry simply appearing to be poetry; there are different types of poetry and this version, in layout, appears to be cognizant of that fact. Furthermore, the poetry is generally divided into stanzas, which is how we English speaking people are used to finding our poetry. If you open any book of poems, it has already been divided into stanzas. An English translation of Holy Scripture should have the same look and feel as English poetry (e. e. cummings notwithstanding).

**Section Headings:** God's Word™ uses a bold, italicized large font to distinguish its section headings.

#### **Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Like several other translations (the NIV or CEV come immediately to mind), the type layout matches the type of literature found. In other words, poetry looks like poetry (in fact, in *God's Word*™, the poetry rhymes, more or less, which, insofar as I know, is unique among translations). The Quick Start introduction is a

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<sup>30</sup> *God's Word*™, Word Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, front inside book cover.

<sup>31</sup> *God's Word*™, Word Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, p. vii.

<sup>32</sup> Their words.

<sup>33</sup> *God's Word*™, Word Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, p. xi–xii.

<sup>34</sup> *God's Word*™, Word Publishing; Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1995 by God's Word to the Nations Bible Society, p. xii.

reasonable approach. The second page in which the contents of the books are summarized, along with recommendations for what books to read first, is good, and possibly a unique approach as well.

There are some verses translated in **God's Word™** which are almost unique in their rendering:

Passage	God's Word™	KJV	NEB
Rom. 9:5	The Messiah is descended from their ancestors according to his human nature. The Messiah is God over everything, forever blessed. Amen.	Whose <i>are</i> the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ <i>came</i> , who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.	Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah. May God, supreme above all, be blessed for ever! Amen.

Now and again, **God's Word™** rearranges the verses somewhat, and gives a slightly different view of a passage. For most translations, I would write it off as imaginative and self-indulgent. However, their accuracy throughout causes me to look more closely at what they have done as a viable alternative rendering.

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	God's Word™
16:19 – 16:22	Furthermore, realize, my Witness [is] in heaven, and my Eyewitness [is] in the heights. My friends [are] my [life's] interpreters [or, Let my prayer come to the Lord]; my eye pours out tears to God. And He [the Eyewitness] would make a cause clear between a man and God [as] a son of man with his associate, when counted years come and I go the way [from which] I will not return."	And now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high. My appeal will come face to face with the Lord, and let mine eye weep before him. Oh that a man might plead before the Lord, even as the son of man with his neighbor! But my years are numbered and come, and I will go by the way by which I will not return.	"Even now, look! My witness is in heaven, and the one who testifies for me is above, the spokesman for my thoughts [or, <i>my friends mock me</i> ] My eyes drip [with tears] to God because in a few short years I will take the path of no return. But my witness will plead for a human in front of God. The Son of Man will plead for his friend!"

You will note in the previous passage the reinterpretation of vv. 19b and 21, as well as the rearrangement of the verses, placing v. 22 before v. 21.

Finally, a summative comment on the modern English translations in general, and **God's Word™** in particular. **God's Word™**, although it is a modern English translation, tends to follow the Hebrew and Greek text fairly closely, unlike, for instance, the CEV, which tends to become, in my opinion, too imaginative in its rendering of the original languages, particularly in poetry. If you want a modern, easy-to-read translation, but one which does not stray too far from the original text, then I would choose **God's Word™** over the CEV.

**Additional Features:** In the KJV, when a word does not occur in the original, it is placed in italics. In **God's Word™**, when a word is added for clarity, then it is enclosed by half-brackets (and I am now wondering, just how can you take a thought-for-thought translation and not insert dozens and dozens of words into every chapter?). I found these half brackets more often than I expected to.

There are very few footnotes in **God's Word**<sup>™</sup>; rarely are there more than one or two per page. However, rather than dealing with the translation, as do the footnotes in most sparsely footnoted translations, these often point out some tidbit of information to help with the understanding of a particular word or passage. The new believer may find the additional notes of the NIV Study Bible or of the CEV helpful in their own personal study of God's Word.

**Recommendations:** If you want an easy-to-read Bible translated into Modern English, but you don't want a version where the translators allowed their imagination to run away with the meaning of a passage in some places, then **God's Word**<sup>™</sup> is an excellent choice.

**Additional Notes:** This Bible had surprisingly little filler. At the end is a very short topical index (13 pages). The preface was brief and informative.

## The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

### Version examined:

### Summation:

### Preface:

I don't have a copy of this translation yet. What I have either came from their website or from other related web sites.

### Translation:

**Translators:** A translation team of more than eighty scholars from twenty different denominations began with a word-for-word translation process, then styled the language to communicate clearly with modern American English readers.<sup>35</sup>

**Date of Translation:** 2000

**Stated Purpose:** The Holman Bible Publishers undertook this project to provide an accurate translation styled for today's reader, without bowing to recent trends, ideology or the politics of today's world.<sup>36</sup>

### Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

### Notes on the New Testament Translation:

**Portion Translated:** New Testament only (so far). Translators are presently working on the Old Testament.

### Vocabulary:

**Grade Level:** 9–10<sup>th</sup> grade level

### Assumptions Made:

### Bias:

### Description of Translation:

### Capitalization:

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<sup>35</sup> From [http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/cms\\_content/98021465?page=30102&sp=1003&event=1003RNF](http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/cms_content/98021465?page=30102&sp=1003&event=1003RNF).

<sup>36</sup> From [http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/cms\\_content/98021465?page=30102&sp=1003&event=1003RNF](http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/cms_content/98021465?page=30102&sp=1003&event=1003RNF).

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

Now and again, the HCSB I think gives an inferior translation where they could have really stepped up to the place and given a more powerful and more accurate rendering of the text. For instance:

<b>Holman Christian Standard Bible</b>	<b>A More Accurate Rendering</b>
"If you know Me, you will also know My Father. From now on you do know Him and you have seen Him."	"If you know Me, you <b>have also known</b> My Father. From now on you do know Him and you have seen Him."
"Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us."	"Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us."
Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:7–9).	Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; <b>so</b> how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:7–9).

Here, the HCSB makes a translation that could be so much better with some minor changes. In the first verse, we should have the perfect tense instead of the future tense. That the person of Jesus is so aligned with God the Father that when the disciples see Jesus, they have also seen God the Father—these means more than, they *will* see God the Father. In the third verse, there is the kai conjunction which the HCSB leaves out; however, that, I believe, should remain in the translation, which continues the thought.

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The James Moffatt Translation

### Version examined:

### Summation:

Rightfully called the *grandfather of the modern English translations*. Moffatt does not capitalize pronouns which refer to God; and he reveals some inspiration of the charismatic movement as well (although I am not certain if he had any ties to this movement, as it was in its infancy when Moffatt translated Holy Writ).

### Preface:

**Translation:** The James Moffatt Translation, originally called *A New Translation of the Bible*. Between the two world wars, this was the most popular modern-speech translation in America.

**Translators:** James Moffatt, a Scotsman (1870–1944). Moffatt is called the grandfather of the *modern translation* of Scripture. About a year or so after I had decided that this was one of the more worthless translations of Scripture, I read the following in the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible: *James Moffatt was an outstanding theological liberal, who frankly disclaimed belief in the verbal inspiration of Scripture. This viewpoint affected his work, especially in certain crucial passages. Still, this is a work of solid scholarship and brilliant style and has been popular for many years.*<sup>37</sup>

**Date of Translation:** First version: 1928 followed by a final version in 1935.

**Stated Purpose:** David Ewert, in describing Moffatt's translation, wrote: *The arrival of the twentieth century marked the beginning of modern speech versions. The archaeological discovery of secular Greek papyri in the sands of Egypt convinced biblical scholars that the Bible was originally written in the language of its day, and this in turn encouraged scholars to translate Scripture into contemporary English.*<sup>38</sup> Moffatt sought to take the Greek and Hebrew text and render this into a modern English version, with an eye toward recent discoveries in archaeology, philology and related sciences. In most cases when Scripture is translated, the people involved are believers who trust in Christ as their Savior and believe that the Bible is the Word of God. While Moffatt clearly venerates Scripture, he does not seem to place it above and beyond all other literature, but in a high class of literature instead. He writes: *This is great literature and great religious literature, this collection of ancient writings which we call the Bible, and any translator has a deep sense of responsibility as he undertakes to transmit it to modern readers.*<sup>39</sup> Now, this does not mean that he denigrates Scripture—he treats his task of translating the Bible with great responsibility: *He [the translator] desires his transcript to be faithful to the meaning of the original, so far as he can reach that meaning, and also to do some justice to its literary qualities. But he is well aware that his aim often exceeds his grasp. Translation may be a fascinating task, yet no discipline is more humbling.*<sup>40</sup>

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Moffatt follows the MT in 1Chron. 1:51, but separates it into two verses, as do most translators. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; Moffatt follows the Hebrew. In Job 15:11–12, Moffatt used equal parts interpretation, Hebrew and Greek to come up with his translation of this passage (notice, I did not use the word

<sup>37</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580.

<sup>38</sup> David Ewert, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*; IVP, 1990; from *The Bible, James Moffatt Translation*; Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI; ©1994, p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> *The Bible, James Moffatt Translation*; Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI; ©1994, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *The Bible, James Moffatt Translation*; Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI; ©1994, p. 15.



*imagination*). He rendered this passage: *The divine comfort that we bring, you slight, these words of ours that deal with you so gently? Why let your passions carry you away? Why do your eyes flash proudly?* Although I am not a fan of Moffatt’s translation, what he did in this case was quite reasonable for a modern language rendering.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** Moffatt occasionally rearranged chapters and verse of the Old Testament where he felt the Hebrew order was unclear. This rearrangement of verses is no more striking than in the first few lines of Genesis, where Moffatt begins with v. 4 of Genesis chapter 2: *This is the story of how the universe was formed. When God began to form the universe, the world was void and vacant, darkness lay over the abyss; but the spirit of God was hovering over the waters, God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light* (Gen. 2:4 1:1–3).

From what I can pick up, Moffatt was influenced by many of the liberal theories of his day as to the later dates of the original writing, as well as possibly the multiple authorship of the books of Moses. Conservative scholars disagreed with Moffatt on many such points.

There are times when it is difficult to determine which manuscript Moffatt followed—the Massoretic text or the Septuagint.

The Passage	Literal Hebrew	Literal Greek	Moffatt
Job 15:30	He will not turn aside from darkness; his shoot will dry up—a flame; and will depart in a wind his mouth.	Neither will he in any way escape the darkness; let the wind blast his blossom, and let his flower fall off.	His branches wither in the heat, his fruit is whirled off by the wind;

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** I must admit that the only thing that makes me grimace more in New Testament renderings more than the word *tongues* is the combination of the words *unknown tongues* in I Cor. 14. Moffatt does render the word in question *tongues* (which is, as a matter of fact, quite accurate, as the same word refers to the literal tongue of a person). There are times when Moffatt is very evangelical, as in John 1:1–3, 12, which read: *The Logos existed in the very beginning, the Logos was with God, the Logos was divine. He was with God in the very beginning: through him all existence came into being, no existence came into being apart from him...So the Logos became flesh and tarried among us; we have seen his glory—glory such as an only son enjoys from his father—seen it to be full of grace and reality.* You will note that Moffatt chose to transliterate the word *word* (*Logos*) in this verse.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Relatively simple. Moffatt occasionally chooses an odd word here or there not found elsewhere. For instance, early on in Gen. 1, we find the *Vault* mentioned several times, and *Logos* in John 1.

**Grade Level:** High school Freshman or Sophomore level.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** Whereas many of the prefaces of most translations seem to drip evangelical thought, Moffatt’s does not. In fact, it sounds that he is more of a liberal theologian than anything else (although there is not enough in his

preface to determine this for certain).<sup>41</sup> This does not mean that his translation will be worse; in fact, in some instances, his translation may be more accurate.

The liberal bias can really be felt from the very beginning: Gen. 1:1–2a reads: **This is the story of how the universe was formed. When God began to form the universe, the world was void and vacant, darkness lay over the abyss; but the spirit of God was hovering over the waters,...** (Moffatt incorporates Gen. 2:4 into this verse). There is no reason to place Gen. 2:4 at the beginning of the Word of God; furthermore, Moffatt's selection of words does not give the beginning of the Bible the same force of accuracy; it sounds as though one could take this as a bedtime story. Furthermore, there is no justification for moving Gen. 2:4 to the beginning of the Bible.

Moffatt produced this translation during an interesting time of Christian history. Although the tongues movement existed, it was not very widespread and those who spoke in tongues were often dismissed by fundamental believers as nutty. In I Cor. 14, the believers are said to speak in *tongues*, which is a perfectly good rendering in the 1600–1800 era. It would be better rendered *foreign languages* in a modern translation; and, if one wished for an even greater literal rendering, one would have use the term *dialects* instead. Now, what is interesting is Moffatt's work in 1Sam. 10—Saul is simply said to prophesy, which is the correct rendering. But he is not prophesying along with *prophets*, but with *dervishes*. In case you are unaware of what a *dervish* is, he is a member of an ascetic Muslim order, some of whom carry on ecstatic observations, which include violent dancing, whirling and vociferous chanting and shouting.<sup>42</sup> It is clear, in this text, that these men played music (or were involved with music). However, the inference of Moffatt's translation is not apropos to this passage.

**Description of Translation:** This is a very readable translation, although it is dated. There is no tinge of King James English, and the rendering is perhaps slightly less literate than one would expect from a scholar of Scotland.

**Capitalization:** Moffatt does not capitalize pronouns which refer to deity, but he did capitalize *Logos* from John 1:1ff.

**Order of Translation:** Traditional. However, Moffatt was very free about moving passages around. He moves Gen. 2:4 to the beginning of the Bible, rather than Gen. 1:1. Between vv. 9 and 11 of 1Sam. 8, Moffatt inserts 1Sam. 10:17–19 (I don't know where 1Sam. 8:10 is); then 1Sam. 9 is skipped, but 1Sam. 8 is not followed by the remainder of 1Sam. 10, but by 1Sam. 10:19–24. Then we go to 1Sam. 12 followed by 1Sam. 10:25–27, followed by 1Sam. 9 followed by 1Sam. 10:1–16, 1Sam. 11 and finally 1Sam. 13 (after which, Moffatt pretty much follows the normal order of 1Samuel). In Zech. 12–14, he begins with Zech. 13:7–9, then goes to Zech. 12, goes back to 13:1–6, and then finishes with Zech. 14. These are not exceptional examples. Moffatt reorders passages in Scripture at will, without explanation, and generally without any textual precedence.

**Strong Points:** It is easier for the average person to read and understand than the KJV; however, it is not *that* much easier.

**Weak Points:** A big negative concerning Moffatt's translation is that, even though it is easy to read and understand, what you understand may not have been the original intention of that particular author. What you are getting is very much a liberal commentary on Scripture, very carefully disguised as a translation.

One problem which Moser notes early on with some translations is that the personal enmity between the serpent, Satan, and the specific individual Seed of the woman—i.e., the Messiah—has been made more into a disagreement between two groups. **“And I will set a feud between you and the woman, between your brood and hers; they shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel.”** (Gen. 3:15, Moffatt's translation). Contrast the NASB: **“And I will but enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

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<sup>41</sup> Geisler and Nix do call him a *liberal theologian* in Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 441, something which I read several years after writing the aforementioned comments.

<sup>42</sup> Paraphrased from Webster's *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*; Barnes & Noble, Inc., ©1994, p. 390.

Moffatt's liberal influences are quite apparent in Isa. 7:13b–14, which reads: “An omen you shall have, and that from the Eternal himself. There is a young woman with child, who shall bear a son and call his name ‘Immanuel’ (God is with us)...” We have discussed this issue of whether we are speaking of a *young girl* or *virgin*. Unlike some of the more modern translations, Moffatt does not redeem himself in Matt. 1:23, either: *The maiden will conceive and bear a son, and his name is to be called Immanuel (which may be translated, God is with us)*.

The language which, in most translations, emphasizes the importance of the Messiah to come, is rather insipid in Moffatt's Translation of Isa. 9:6: *For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us; the royal dignity he wears, and this the title that he bears—“A wonder of a counselor, a divine hero, a father for all time, a peaceful prince!”* Hear the difference in the KJV: *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* In Moffatt's Translation, it sounds as though Isaiah was speaking about King Solomon. In the KJV, it sounds like the Messiah, the Prince of Glory, the King Who Shall Come.

Isa. 48:16, an important verse to conservative theologians, has been partially excised by Moffatt (perhaps he moved part of the verse elsewhere?). Moffatt's Translation: *From the first I made no secret of it; ever since it began, I have been in it.* The NASB: *“Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.”*

There are times when Moffatt's Translation appears to be just the opposite of what we would expect. He renders Isa. 53:10 as: *“But the Eternal chose to vindicate his servant, rescuing his life from anguish; he let him prosper to the full, in a posterity with life prolonged.”* NASB: *But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a burnt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.* I had to double-check Moffatt to make certain that I was even in the right book. It is possible that portions of v. 10 have been placed elsewhere, commonplace in Moffatt's Translation.

As you would expect with a more liberal-view rendering, eternity is not a central issue. Therefore, we do not find the same emphasis upon eternity in Job 19:26 Micah 5:2 as we do in the KJV or the NASB. However, this is not always the case; Moffatt does make mention of eternal things in Psalm 45:6.

Moffatt often renders prophetic references in such a way as for them to lose their impact or importance. Moffatt translation Psalm 22:15–16 as: *my throat is as dry as a potsherd, my tongue cleaves to my jaws; my hands and feet are all disfigured, and I am laid low in the dust of death. For a pack of curs encircle me, a gang of villains surround me;...* In contrast, the KJV reads: *My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.* In the KJV, the Messiah's death is associated with rich men and with criminals (our Lord was crucified between two criminals; He was buried in the tomb of the rich man, Joseph of Arimathea); in Moffatt's translation, Messiah is associated with a felon and with criminals in His death. Another serious problem is the prophecy of Messiah in Zech. 13:6. In the KJV, it reads: *And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.* The NASB reads: *“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your hands?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of those who love me.’”* [the literal rendering offered by the NASB was used each time. Now note Moffatt's Translation: *When he is asked, “Then what are these scars on your hands?” he will answer, “I got these in my harlot's house.”* Obviously, there is quite a bit of difference here.

One great loss of impact or importance is Psalm 23:4, which Moffatt renders: *My road may run through as a glen of gloom, but I fear no harm, for thou art beside me; thy club, thy staff—they give me courage.* The NASB would provide more comfort for a person who realizes that he is dying: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.* However, Moffatt's rendering may be more accurate than I give him credit for, as the more literal rendering of this verse by the NASB is: *Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I fear no harm; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.*

**Criticisms:** It is obvious that there was a lot in this translation which I did not like. I actually did not cover every verse which I found objectionable. There were still another dozen or so of the standard verses which I like to look at (most of which were inspired by Moser's critiques of the new translations).

**His Comments:** James Moffatt writes: *This is great literature and great religious literature, this collection of ancient writings which we call the Bible, and any translator has a deep sense of responsibility as he undertakes to transmit it to modern readers. He desires his transcript to be faithful to the meaning of the original, so far as he can reach that meaning, and also to do some justice to its literary qualities. But he is well aware that his aim often exceeds his grasp.*<sup>43</sup> This last sentence is personally accurate, if not an understatement. In his preface, Moffatt makes a big to-do about intellectual scholarship and honesty, aiming for a *trustworthy* translation, which means that he either failed miserably in these regards or that this was just so much hoo-hah.

**Layout:** Moffatt was perhaps the first translator to render poetry as poetry and prose in paragraph form.

**Section Headings:** None.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** I don't know if any of you recall the Armstrong Cult (The World Wide Church of God which, in recent years has become orthodox); but Garner Ted Armstrong used to quote from Moffatt's translation quite frequently. Of all the translations which I own, this is probably the least useful (although it is not nearly as useless and self-serving as the New World Translation, which is in a class by itself). I would not even trust this translation in order to get the gist of a difficult verse.

**Additional Features:** The version I purchased published by Kregel, there was a concordance. Apart from this and a few notes here and there dealing with Moffatt's choice for a particular rendering, there are no other features.

**Recommendations:** I would only recommend that you buy this out of intellectual curiosity. As a translation, it is one of the worst.

**Additional Notes:** When a citation in the New Testament is similar to one from the old, this is noted using italics, and three dots (...) are used to indicate a break in the original text. There are only a handful of notes here and there describing why Moffatt chose to render a verse this way rather than that. There are no notes with regards to the meaning or interpretation of Scripture.

What is ironic is, Moffatt is called by those who review his work an Oxford scholar, whereas the credentials of those who rendered the Twentieth Century New Testament are brought into question (and they are not called scholars). However, their version puts Moffatt's to shame. Personally, as one who holds several degrees and one who is self-taught in several fields, I can testify that having a degree in a particular area does not guarantee scholarship in that area; and lacking a degree in another area, does not render one inferior in knowledge to those who have a degree in that area.

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<sup>43</sup> *The Bible, James Moffatt Translation*; Kregel Publications; Grand Rapids, MI; ©1994, p. 15.

## Tanakh—The Jewish Publication Society Translation

### Version examined:

#### Summation:

A very accurate and literate rendering of the Old Testament. Although there are a few significant passages where one can detect the influence of Judaism (more accurately, a non-Christian slant), this is still a very conservative, literal and literate rendering of the sacred Jewish writings.

### Preface:

**Translation:** This is called The Jewish Bible, Tanakh, the Holy Scriptures—the new JPS (Jewish Publication Society) translation.

**Translators:** This was a collaboration of academic scholars and rabbis from the three largest branches of organized Judaism in the United States.

**Date of Translation:** This translation was begun in 1955, and each section was published separately until the final version was assembled as one volume; ©1985.

**Stated Purpose:** The translators see this as the first major translation of Old Testament Scriptures since the translation of the Septuagint, prominently calling attention to that translation both on the inside book cover and in the preface. The JPS did publish a translation of Scripture in 1917 as well.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** There is no NT in the Tanakh—it is a Jewish Bible.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Being what this is, a Jewish Bible, we would have expected the translators to simply follow the Massoretic text without giving thought to the Greek Septuagint (e.g., 1Sam. 4:1 Job 15:30). The MT is followed in 1Chron. 1:51, which is separated into two verses, as it rightly should be (assuming v. 51a is a part of Scripture in the first place). Although we would expect this translation of Scripture to virtually ignore the Greek Septuagint, it does not. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the Tanakh follows the Hebrew, but footnotes the Greek rendering.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** When translating the Torah, the best known portion of the Old Testament, the translators adhered quite closely to the Massoretic text, noting alternate readings in the footnotes. However, when dealing with the more obscure passages of the prophets, they depended more heavily upon emendations (ancient marginal notes), sometimes using them in the translation (which, apparently, some translators have always done, without always noting it).

Here's the deal: although the **Septuagint** was more or less adopted by 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians (and those who followed), the translation was made from Hebrew into Greek by Jewish scholars prior to the Christian era. Therefore, there is no reason for modern Jewish scholars to discount the Septuagint as a *Christian translation*. Happily, the JPS are reasonably objective scholars, and the **Septuagint** was consulted throughout.

**Portion Translated:** Obviously, because this is a *Jewish translation*, just the Old Testament.

**Vocabulary:** It is easy to read, and generally easy to understand; however, now and again, a marvelous word or two is thrown in, such as: “[Is a multitude of words unanswerable? Must a loquacious person be right? Your prattle may silence men...](#)” (Job 11:2–3a). I personally like that, although this has been translated into modern English, they translators did not confine themselves to a limited and simple a vocabulary. Where the Hebrew reads: [I call to my servant but he does not answer](#) (Job 19:16a), the JPS renders this [I summon my servant but he does not respond](#). In other words, they give this translation a modern feel without dumbing it down. Now, don’t misunderstand me—there is a real place in the Christian world for simple translations. I have no problem with that. However, it is refreshing to find translators who have an extensive vocabulary that they are not afraid to use.

**Grade Level:** High school Junior or Senior level, and sometimes higher. There are times when the vocabulary is too simple and times when it is extensive. See **Vocabulary** above.

### **Assumptions Made:**

**Special Note:** I should point out to the uninitiated that the Christian Old Testament and the Jewish Old Testament do not always agree in the verse numbering. The most common occurrence is in the Psalms where the *by line* or the introductory portion of the verse is not numbered in the Christian Bible, but is consistently v. 1 in the Jewish Bibles. This extends throughout. Therefore, if when quoting the JPS, I write, for instance, Psalm 22:16(17); v. 16 is the *Christian* number of the verse and v. 17 is the *Jewish* numbering of the parallel verse.

**Bias:** Although this is obviously a translation made for Jewish people, I found very few instances of intentional tampering with, say, the Messianic passages (e.g., Isa. 9:5–6 or Isa. 53) would might lead a person away from Christ. A notable exception was Zech. 12:10, which I have personally exegeted from the Hebrew and their rendering is just wrong. Their translation reads: “[But I will fill the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a spirit of pity and compassion; and they shall lament to Me about those who are slain, wailing over them as over a favorite son and showing bitter grief as over a first-born.](#)” It should read: “[And I will pour out upon a house of David and upon those inhabiting Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication and they will be caused to look unto Me Whom they have pierced and they will lament as a mourner on behalf of an only child and a grievous weeping over Him as a grievous weeping over the first-born.](#)” See the **Criticisms** below for more examples. Recognizing that there might be an instance or two of bias on the part of their translators is prudent; however, one should have the same prudence when reading the Old Testament as translated by believing Christians. However, and this is important when considering the purchase of this translation, this is nowhere near as self serving as the Jehovah Witness Bible, which consistently panders to Jehovah Witness doctrine. With the exception of a handful of passages, any believing Christian could go to this translation for guidance, inspiration, comfort and study.

There was one verse translation in the Tanakh which surprised me. Although I certainly expected this version of Old Testament Scripture to lean toward Judaism, I did not expect there to be a charismatic influence (there have been Jewish mystics just as there have been *Christian* mystics). In 1Sam. 10:10b, where Saul prophesies among the prophets, the JPS rendering is [...he spoke in ecstasy among them](#).

**Description of Translation:** For reasons I cannot explain, when I began to read Genesis, the text seemed hurried. I seemed to be thrown right into the second day of creation (or, restoration) before I knew what hit me. The vocabulary was modern and easy to understand. However, I find this to be among the most readable of the modern English translations, and very refreshing. It is at once original, accurate and a pleasure to read.

**Capitalization:** In the first chapter of Genesis, there is an unusual approach—when God gives names to various things (the *day*, the *sea*, etc.), the JPS treats these as proper names and capitalizes them. The pronouns associated with *God* are also capitalized. Sometimes, pronouns referring to deity are capitalized even when it is not completely clear that it is God being referred to (e.g., Job 15:30). There are several things in this translation which are capitalized that one would not expect (e.g., the House of Judah).

**Order of Translation:** The Old Testament is placed in the traditional Jewish order: first the Torah (the Law of Moses); then the Nevi'im (which is the prophets, which is Joshua, Judges, I and I1Samuel, I and 2Kings, Isaiah,

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve); and finally, the Kethuvim, or the writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and I and 2Chronicles). To the uninitiated, this may be rather disconcerting. To the Jew, this is the standard ordering.

**Strong Points:** Most of the psalms have a short introduction or *by* line which, to the unlearned, often appears to be an insertion by the translators. However, it is clear in this translation that it is a part of the original text.

There are certainly some verses which have been reasonable rendered. Isa. 9:6(5) reads: *For a child has been born to us, A son has been given us. And authority has settled on his shoulders. He has been named "The Mighty God is planning grace; The Eternal Father, a peaceable ruler"*— Isa. 53:9: *And his grave was set among the wicked, And with the rich, in his death—...* Mal. 3:1 is another: *Behold, I am sending My messenger to clear the way before Me, and the Lord whom you seek shall come to His Temple suddenly. As for the angel of the covenant that you desire, he is already coming.*

One of the great things about the KJV is its literary power. It was both a great translation and a great literary work. The JPS is one of the few modern translations which I see as both a great translation as well as a fine literary work.

**Weak Points:** We lose some of the majesty of the KJV, which begins the Bible with: *In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.* JPS reads: *When God began to create heavens and earth—*

There are times when we lose the sense of eternity, as in the rendering of Micah 5:2(1–2a): *And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrath, Lest among the clans of Judah, From you one shall come forth To rule Israel for Me—One whose origin is from of old, From ancient times.* The equivalent passage in the NASB is: *"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."*

Under *not completely objectionable, but they could have done better:* Psalm 45:6(7): *Your divine throne is everlasting; your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.* (KJV: *Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter*). Job 19:26: *This, after my skin will have been peeled off, but I would behold God while still in my flesh,...* (KJV: *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:...*).

**Criticisms:** Being that this is a Jewish Bible, there will be times that it will render anything which might be taken as prophetic of Jesus the Messiah in such a way that it will not be so interpreted by the reader. The virgin birth of Isa. 7:14, in the JPS, reads: *Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of His own accord! Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel.* They do, however, footnote *Immanuel* as meaning, *with us is God.* Psalm 22:16(17): *Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions [they maul] my hands and feet.* Same verse, NASB: *For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and feet.*

### **Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry; and prose looks like prose. Furthermore, the poetry is generally divided into stanzas, which is how we English speaking people are used to finding our poetry. If you open any book of poems, it has already been divided into stanzas. An English translation of Holy Scripture should have the same look and feel as English poetry (e. e. Cummings notwithstanding).

**Section Headings:** None.

**Footnotes:** This particular Old Testament Bible makes no attempt to proselytize or influence through their footnotes. The footnotes primarily deal with the translation itself. The most common footnote is *Meaning of Heb. uncertain*, which tends to be found on almost every page in reference sometimes to several passages on that page. This is *not* an indication of weak or sloppy work, but of careful, honest, conservative scholarship.

A short glossary is also provided to help with understanding the footnotes. The footnotes themselves are rather sparse, averaging about 2–3 per page.

Some footnotes make reference to alternate readings from the Septuagint (which is interesting, as the early Christians adopted the Septuagint as their own, so the Jews of the first few centuries therefore rejected this translation). Still others give a more literal rendering of a passage or an alternate reading of same; and a very few refer us to other passages.

One of the unique aspects to the footnotes found in the JPS translation is, sometimes a phrase is footnoted—that is, the superscript is found at the beginning and at the end of the phrase. This is superior to what the NASB does (the superscript is found with the first word of a phrase) and superior to what most other translations do (where the superscript is found at the end of a phrase). In this way, I immediately know the complete phrase being footnoted.

**Personal Comments:** Bear in mind that this is a translation made for Jews and not for Christians; therefore, some of the passages will reflect Judaism more than they will reflect Christian thought. In reviewing the KJV or the NASB, a Jewish theologian would no doubt make similar statements. Nevertheless, after purchasing this translation, I use it often when comparing the various renderings of a verse. I love that it is not dumbed down and yet is easy to read, nevertheless. When it comes to the Old Testament, this is about as easy to read and understand as is the NLT or the CEV, but it is more accurate in most passages. If you are one who carefully studies Scripture, then I highly recommend this version as a second or third Bible.

If anything, I began an examination of this translation expecting to encounter serious bias and slanted scholarship; however, this has become one of my favorite translations and I highly recommend it. I find this Old Testament translation to be far superior to that found in the *Complete Jewish Bible* (which is the attempt of a Jewish Christian to make the Bible more *Jewish*).<sup>44</sup>

**Additional Features:** There is a list of weekly (Sabbath) readings, and a list of what should be read on special Sabbaths and other special days. Footnotes are used for several reasons (1) to admit that the translators themselves do not understand the rendering of any particular passage; (2) to give a reasonable alternate rendering of a verse; (3) to recall a very familiar, yet incorrect, translation of a verse; (4) to refer to another passage in Scripture to help with understanding the passage at hand; and, (5) to give important textual variants.

There is no running commentary, which is exactly what we would expect from a Jewish Bible. Their running commentary (at least for the Law), is the Talmud and the Mishna, and, to a lesser extent, the Midrash. Although these texts are not revered as Scripture, they occupy a place much higher than does an Old or New Testament commentary to a Christian. If you took the best commentary you could find, to the Jew, the Talmud would rank somewhere between your reverence or respect for that commentary and the Bible itself. Given the exalted position of these works, adding a commentary to a Jewish Bible would seem presumptuous.

**Recommendations:** When it comes to the Old Testament, I recommend this version much more than I would its Christian counterpart in the CEV, NLT, NEB or the REB. It is erudite, accurate and a comfortable if not enjoyable read.

**Additional Notes:** Interestingly enough, several mentions in the preface are made of *Christian* translations made of the Bible throughout the years, and even a very brief history of the Church is included, as it pertains. My point here is that the Christian Church played a major part in the preservation and transmission of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. A lesser group of Jewish scholars might want to downplay or even ignore completely this invaluable tradition of Christian scholarship and contribution. The JPS treats the contribution of Christian scholars over the centuries with great respect.

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<sup>44</sup> However, I should point out that David Stern, the translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* admits that his Old Testament is simply a paraphrase of the 1917 JPS text (which actually dated back to 1617) with some adjustments here and there.





## The King James Version

### Version examined:

**Summation:** Although immersed in Old English, the KJV stands today as still being one of the most accurate as well as the strongest literary work of all the translations.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The King James Version, also known as *the Authorized Version*, which is easily the most famous of all translations of the Bible. I own at least 25 different translations of the Bible, and several versions of the same translation, and several versions of the King James translation. In all of these, I could not locate the *Dedication of the Authorized Version*. Luckily, Thieme, despite all his razzing of the KJV, includes this in his booklet *Canonicity*. It is well-worth going to [Berachah's Web Site](#) and ordering a copy (they do not charge, they don't put you on some kind of a mailing list and they do not harass you for money). The book, *Canonicity*, by the way, is outstanding.

**Preface:** In case you were unaware, the KJV is an emotional issue with many believers. Because of all the modern translations, there are a huge number of younger believers out there who only know that KJV by name, which is unfortunate. Certainly, there are easier to understand translations out there (essentially, most of them). However, as a work of literature, other translations pale next to the King James Version. It is unsurpassed when it comes to eloquence, inherent power and passion. That being said, the Apostle Paul did not use the KJV. Isaiah did not write in Old English. Only the **autographs** are inspired, as we understand the **Doctrine of Inspiration**. God certainly had a hand in the translation of the KJV and, on the human level, it is an inspired translation. No other translation in history will ever carry the same weight as has the KJV. However, it is **not** the 100% accurate, inspired Word of God—it is simply a translation of God's Word as the translators were best able to render it, given the restraints of textual criticism and language. I visited a web site the other day that quite impressed me, not that it was all that professional-looking, but it presented the gospel accurately (which is a rarity on the web). However, when it began to tout the KJV as the *only* real translation of God's Word, actually stating that the KJV was the inspired English version, the site lost its credibility with me.

**Translators:** King James I of England was actually schooled in Calvinism, Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and, after listening to a number of theological debates in Parliament, correctly decided that there was not a decent, contemporary English translation of the Bible (there were perhaps a half-dozen English versions extant at that time), and commissioned that one be done. On July 22, 1604, King James handpicked 54 men whose qualifications were based upon their knowledge of the original languages rather than upon their theological leanings. Some unbelievers were among these he commissioned. By the end, seven men had died. These scholars were broken down into six teams; two teams working at Oxford, two at Cambridge and two at Westminster. There was a certain amount of *school spirit*; therefore, one group translated *pneuma spirit* and another group rendered it *ghost*. This is why there are certain areas in the KJV where we have no consistency where we believe consistency should exist. Their work was finished and published in 1611.<sup>45</sup> This is not, however, the KJV which we use today. Revisions were made in 1613, 1629 and 1638. However, final revisions were made at Cambridge (1762) and at Oxford (1769), and this is what we call the KJV today. The final revisions apparently dealt primarily with spelling.

**Date of Translation:** Commissioned 1603 or 1604; published in 1611.

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<sup>45</sup> Much of this was paraphrased from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Canonicity*; ©1973 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; pp. 51–54.

**Stated Purpose:** To have a good, updated English translation of the Bible.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the KJV will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in that same passage. In Judges 15:5, it went half way—there is a conjunction in the Greek, but not in the Hebrew; the KJV lists the conjunction in italics (meaning that it was added). In Judges 16:13–14, they leave out a portion of Scripture which is found in the LXX but not in the MT, even though it is obviously missing from the latter. It is not even footnoted. Throughout, the MT is preferred over the LXX (e.g., Judges 1:18 2:3 18:17–18 19:18 1Chron. 1:51a Job 15:30), however, this is simply a preference. In the Massoretic text, we have the masculine pronoun (as a suffix) in Ruth 3:15, and so translated by Owen and Young. However, the KJV went with the feminine pronoun found in the Syriac and Latin manuscripts (the Greek is inconclusive).

**1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the KJV follows the Hebrew.

#### **Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** The King James' translators used what was known as *Textus Receptus*, which means *the text received by all*. These were tenth century manuscripts which were reproduced in 1516.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** The KJV set the standard and several translations will often *default* to the KJV when there is a question. In I Cor. 12–14, the KJV preceded *tongues* with the word *unknown* (in italics). This meant that there was no word in the Greek which was translated *unknown*; it was simply added by the translators in order to help explain or to smooth out the passage. The translators, insofar as I can determine, were not giving this passage the charismatic viewpoint (as there was no such thing in King James' day); they were simply referring to a language which was unknown to the hearers. Because this has been interpreted incorrectly by **charismatics**, the NKJV leaves out the word *unknown*.

**Portion Translated:** Originally, the Old and New Testaments, as well as the **apocrypha**. The apocrypha was later dropped from the KJV.

**Vocabulary:** Almost Shakespearean. However, if you are a young person, do not let that worry you. Of all the versions which I have read, the KJV, in many key passages, is the most powerful and moving. Translation is an art as well as a science; a fact which the translators of the KJV seemed to be aware.

**Grade Level:** High school junior and senior Shakespear students. College students familiar with Shakespear.

**Assumptions Made:** Although there were unbelievers who were a part of the translating teams, the majority treated this as the Word of God.

**Bias:** This was a vastly unpopular version when it was printed. Catholics complained that it favored Protestant doctrine; Protestants felt it favored the Catholics; Armenians felt that it leaned toward Calvinism; Calvinist thought the final product was too Armenian in doctrine. Thieme: *...upon its release, the Authorized Version turned out to be the most unpopular and universally condemned translation that had ever come off the printing press. It caused the biggest ruckus ever raised over an edition of the Bible in the English-speaking world...No one liked it except Kings James I.*<sup>46</sup>

**Description of Translation:** This is a very literal, word-for-word rendering from the original languages. The order of the translation often parallels the order of the original. Although this is written in King James' English, it is not

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<sup>46</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Canonicity*; ©1973 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; p. 54.

nearly as difficult as reading and understanding the typical Shakespeare play. A good fix for this is the *Scotfield Reference Bible*. Scotfield takes many of the anachronistic words of the KJV and updates them. The King James' translation is not simply a translation, but a work of art, mirroring the power and strength of the original **autographs**, something which is occasionally lost in other translations. Scotfield's fix of some of the vocabulary does not sacrifice the power and the eloquence of the KJV, yet he increases its readability. Scotfield's slight revision of the KJV was the NKJV many decades before there was a NKJV (and is still, in many ways, superior to the NKJV in its retention of the literary style of the KJV).

Although there has been a very strong influence of the **charismatic movement** in the past century (which has left an impact on several modern English translations), the KJV was free of that sort of influence. The rendering of *glôssa* as *unknown tongues* was a proper rendering 400 years ago. *Unknown* is italicized in the KJV, meaning that it is not found in the Greek. However, *tongues* simply referred to spoken languages. The term *unknown tongues* means that the dialect was unknown to the speaker and, often, to the group of attending listeners as a whole.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not always capitalized (e.g., 1Sam. 15:29). However, there are other times when they are (1Chron. 29:11).

**Order of Translation:** Typical of English translations.

**Strong Points:** There are times when the KJV follows the Hebrew (or the Greek) where some very good translations do not. Under the NASB, I gave the example where the KJV was very accurate in their rendering of Judges 21:22, whereas the NASB puppied out (which is quite rare for them). I would have made a bet that the NKJV messed this verse up, but they did not.

Even more important is that the KJV is a great work of literature, unlike many of the modern translations. There are a number of translations which aim low when it comes to their reading audience, and therefore skimps on the vocabulary. There are quite a number of verses in the KJV which no version has ever improved upon (Heb. 4:12, for instance).

One of the most important strong points of the KJV is that it is generally very accurate and relatively consistent, and falls into the category of translations which are word-for-word translations (very few translations are found here, by the way). Quite frankly, it is very difficult—if not impossible—to be completely consistent when rendering one language into another.

**Weak Points:** There are some inconsistencies in the KJV (which is to be expected in any version). They distinguish between *Bethel* (the city) and *the house of God* in Gen. 28:17 and 19; but then do not consistently render this in Judges 20:26. When it comes to translating certain words, the best reference book listing the inconsistency of the KJV is the introduction to *Young's Literal Translation*; in it, we find that words like *nâthan* are translated 84 different ways in the KJV. Young give over two dozen examples.

There are times when the KJV is flat-out inaccurate. Psalm 73:3a in the King James reads: **For I was envious of the foolish...** However, it should read: **For I was envious of the boastful...** (NKJV).

**Criticisms:** By far, the weakest point of the KJV is the fact that it is written in Old English. Therefore, there are certain phrases and terms which were accurate for that time, which are misleading today. For instance, the word *tongues* meant foreign languages during the time of King James (this is clear by reading the Preface or the Dedication of the KJV, where those who did the translation speak of translating from the original *tongues*). For this reason, the Scotfield KJV or the NKJV are both slightly better choices. Neither sacrifices the power and literalness of the KJV, yet they both update the language wherever necessary (the NKJV is probably better in this regard). On the other hand, where the original KJV is strong from a literary standpoint, Scotfield retains this and the NKJV often does not.

**Their Comments:** The translators, at least in their preface, appeared to recognize that they were dealing with the Word of God. They call it *God's holy truth* and refer to Jesus Christ as *our God and only Savior*.

**Layout:** This varies as per publisher. Generally, a two column format prevails and the various types of writing are not really distinguished (poetry looks no different than prose). Very often, the KJV tends to be separated by verse. That is, one verse does not run into another, but they are separated, almost like they are separate paragraphs. This is a big mistake. The separation of the Bible into chapters and verses is sometimes a very convenient, albeit misused, convention. However, there are many places where this does not work. In 1Chron. 5:1–2, for instance, we have the continuation of a thought which should not be broken up. The chronicler is explaining why Reuben does not have the rights and privileges of the firstborn. This fell first to Joseph. However, *he* is also not accorded the position of firstborn, and the chronicler explains why in v. 2. The *he* at the end of v. 1 refers to Joseph, not to Reuben; however, this is confusing and easy to miss because of the verse separation. V. 1a properly should be a title for this chapter. V. 1b–2 are parenthetical and should be in smaller italicized type below the title or in parentheses below the title. Completely separating these verses, as does the NKJV and the NASB, is a mistake.<sup>47</sup> That being said, there is not a single contemporary version that I am aware of (including the CEV, the NLT and the TEV) which take advantage of the organization of this chapter and properly reflect this as a chapter heading rather than as the beginning of a sentence. The version which I have is the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which lists its references in columns (a middle column in the Old Testament and two outer columns in the New). These are simply noted by footnote letter and not by verse. Footnote *g*, for instance, could actually be a footnote or reference verses for several verses on that page.

**Section Headings:** This varies as to who the publisher is.

#### **Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Many of the verses in the KJV are powerful, moving and memorable—more than in most translations. The KJV, probably more than any other translation, captures in the English some of the literary power which must have been in the original manuscripts. Let me put this in another way: there are authors and then there are authors. Some authors just have a way of grabbing you by the shirt collar and pulling you up close. I believe that many of the passages of the Bible in the original languages did that. The KJV, in my opinion, tends to retain that in many passages more than other translations. When I compare various versions of the Bible, the KJV tends to have the biggest kick to it. I think for this reason, Thieme often refers to *the thundering diction of the King James Version*.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of lame *theologians* who adhere to the KJV as if it were itself the very inspired Word of God. Now, some of their arguments are reasonable, most only sound reasonable, and some are ridiculous and embarrassing. Those who hold to the KJV-only often confuse and alienate newer, younger believers. Although their theology, in other respects, might be quite accurate, this tenacious position takes away from that.

**Comments from others:** J. Vernon McGee: *...the King James translation is the best for public use. Although the American Standard Version of 1901 is probably more accurate, it's very hard to improve on this King James. But there are places where I think we can bring it up to date.*<sup>48</sup>

**Additional Features:** Depends upon the version. If you must have a KJV, then there is no other way to go than the *Scofield Reference Bible*. I personally cut my teeth on this Bible and its notes, although not as dense as those found in the NIV Study Bible, are probably the most accurate of the notes found in any study version of a translation of the Bible and cover the most important doctrines of Scripture (Thieme cites inaccuracies for Scofield's notes on Gen. 6, Heb. 6 and Rev. 2–3). Given that serious inaccuracies can be found on any one page of the NIV Study Bible, this is quite impressive. Scofield's weakness was that he did not know the original

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<sup>47</sup> This may be in only my version of the KJV.

<sup>48</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 34.

languages,<sup>49</sup> and his very, very few inaccuracies would be due, in part, to that. As Thieme pointed out several times, Scofield was a master of brevity. He can say in a sentence what it takes me four or five to replicate. Scofield has also fixed much of the anachronistic Old English phrasing. Therefore, this version retains the power and the eloquence of the KJV, yet increases its readability. It was the NKJV many decades before there was a NKJV.

There is one weakness in the Scofield Bible and that is the layout of their column reference notes. Most modern English translations have, along with the note, the number of the verse which is being referenced. In the Scofield Bible, we simply have the notes listed from *a* to *z*. You cannot look at note *b* and tell where it came from. You must scan several verses in order to determine what note *b* references.

Another feature of the *Scofield Reference Bible* is that parallel passages are noted in the headings. When working in Chronicles, I can immediately see what passage in Kings I would go to for additional information. The headings themselves are very informative, giving in a glance, a rundown of what is to come.

**Recommendations:** If you must have a KJV, buy the *Scofield Reference Bible*. There must be a Scofield NKJV available, which would be the best of all worlds (except for the fact that the power of the KJV is weakened somewhat in the NKJV). However, I run across, now and again, a passage in the NKJV which is accurate but sounds weak and flaccid next to the original King James' Version. I don't know how else to put this, but to say that the KJV is not just a great translation, but a tremendously powerful and moving work of literature, which is something that few, if any, of the other translations can claim.

**Additional Notes:** While there is no doubt that God certainly had a hand in the translation of the King James Bible, it is not inspired in the same sense that the **autographs** of the Old and New Testaments are inspired. Our interest should always be in determining what was said in the original languages, given the grammar, syntax and nuance of those languages. There are some who advocate the KJV only; and some of their reasons are marginally valid, but only in the sense that some things would be made easier and more uniform if all believers carried the same Bible; however, these arguments are negated by the fact that it ain't ever gonna happen. Also, there are many who continue to use King James' language inflections from the pulpit—however, given the state of Christianity at any given time, such things are to be expected. Furthermore, this is not near as goofy or blasphemous as most things that go on in churches, so we certainly should be able to forgive them that.

Some of the early editions of the KJV had some humorous mistakes and misspellings. The word *not* was omitted from the seventh commandment, so that 1631 edition was called the *Wicked Bible*. The 1717 edition was called the *Vinegar Bible* because the chapter heading of Luke 20 read *vinegar* rather than *vineyard*. The 1795 Oxford edition Bible was called the *Murderers' Bible* because *filled* was misspelled *killed* in Mark 7:27.<sup>50</sup>

**The Impact of the KJV:** While there have been many excellent translations to come along in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (e.g., *Young's Literal Translation*, the RSV, the ASV), none of them have had the same impact upon Christianity as has the Authorized Version. Not only are there pastors who seriously argue the veracity and inspiration of the KJV to the exclusion of the other versions of Scripture, but the KJV has colored the translation and interpretation of many translations which have followed it. Below are examples of either mistranslations or interpretations found in the KJV which have been followed by almost every translation since:

## The Impact of the KJV

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<sup>49</sup> If I recall correctly.

<sup>50</sup> Source: Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 421.

Passage	Literal Hebrew Rendering	KJV
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Job 16:12b–13a	And so he set me up for himself for a target; surround against me his many [soldiers].	...and set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about;...
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This particular passage does great damage to the proper understanding of Job 16, which, properly interpreted, gives us a great deal of information about the cross. The problem is this: there are no arrows, there are no archers—however, if you turn to any of your favorite translations, you will find it conforming more closely to the KJV than to the original Hebrew. With the introduction of *archers* or *arrows*, one loses completely the inspired parallel to the cross.

Job 20:22	In fulness of his sufficiency He is oppressive to him every hand of a laborer will come [to] him.	In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits; every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.
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The second line has a clear subject and object and the verb has an active, transitive meaning. However, because the KJV gives it a passive, intransitive meaning, most translations follow suit, which, unfortunately, makes it more difficult to properly interpret this verse.

Job 20:23	Let him be to fill his belly He sends in him a burning of his nostril and let Him rain upon him in his bowels.	When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain <i>it</i> upon him while he is eating.
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If you open up your favorite translation, you will find *God* in v. 23, even though *He* is not found in the original Hebrew. Now, it is reasonable to so interpret this passage, which is the way I personally interpret it. However, for the same reason, I believe that *God* is to be found in the previous verse, yet you would never know it from your personal translation.

## The Message

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:**

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**



**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Like many of the less than literal translations, the Message is every bit as much of a commentary as it is a translation.

<b>Examples of How the Message is a Commentary as Well</b>		
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Reasonably Literal Rendering from the Hebrew</b>	<b>The Message</b>
1Chron. 15:15	And the sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.	The Levites carried the Chest of God exactly as Moses, instructed by GOD, commanded--carried it with poles on their shoulders, <b>careful not to touch it with their hands.</b>
If you read the entire context, you will see that one man was killed for accidentally touching the Ark of God; they attempted to move the Ark in a manner not specified by God. The method was, the Levites were to use poles in order to carry the Ark on their should, and they were not to touch the Ark. So, what the Message has inserted at the end of this verse is true; but it is not found in the original text—none of those words are found in the original text.		

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The Modern King James Version

### Version examined:

**Summation:** Don't think that all updated versions of the KJV is equal. This is a good translation; however, it is not nearly as good as the NKJV.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The Modern King James Version

### Translators:

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** The Old and New Testaments

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:** There are times when this can be a very uneven translation. I was doing a study of Bethel and used e-sword's search to find the occurrences of Bethel in the MKJV. I assumed that this would catch pretty much every instance of Bethel in Scripture—I was wrong. There are several times when we find Beth̄el in the Hebrew, which is translated into *the House of God* rather than as *Bethel*, the proper transliteration. There are several instances where we find the *House of Elohim* rendered as the *House of God* (which is good and proper), but

several times when Beth-el is also so translated. Therefore, without having access to the original Hebrew, we do not know which is which in the MKJV. This is a simple inconsistency which should not have occurred.

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The Modern Reader's Bible

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** The Modern Reader's Bible

**Translators:** Dr. Richard G. Moulton

**Date of Translation:** First copyright 1895

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Throughout, the Modern Reader's Bible leans toward the MT rather than the LXX (e.g., Judges 1:18 2:3 15:5 18:17–18 1Chron. 1:51a Job 15:30). Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, *The Modern Reader's Bible* will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). In the same passage, it chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek. The obviously missing text of Judges 16:13–14, which is located in the LXX, is not found or even footnoted in this version. In **1Sam. 13:15**, Moulton follows the Hebrew where the Greek is more appropriate, as the error clearly appears to be with the Hebrew.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments, along with three books from the [apocrypha](#).

**Vocabulary:** Sophisticated and verbose; still in Old English.

**Grade Level:** Undergraduate college.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** Given the date of this translation, we would not expect it to be affected by [charismatics](#) or the gender-neutralization crowd, and it is not.

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:** The Old Testament is arranged, it appears, like the Massoretic text, with the Law, the prophets and then the writings. However, in the writings we have the **apocrypha**, followed by the book of Job (the last book of the Old Testament). In the New Testament, the epistles of Paul are scattered chronologically throughout the book of Acts. At the end of this we have the other epistles, and then the books of Matthew, Mark, John and Revelation.

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** They use a variety of section headings with a variety of font faces. Most are centered; some are in bold. Some are larger than the surrounding print. It is less distracting than you might think.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:** The last third of the Bible contains a lot of notes of the various books of the Bible, including their various writing styles. These appear to be thrown together in no particular order. It is highly unlikely that you will ever run across this particular version of Scripture.

## The New American Bible

### Version examined:

**Summation:** A Catholic approved translation which tends to be a very easy-to-read, thought-for-thought rendering of the original text.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The New American Bible

**Translators:** Primarily put together by a committee of Catholic scholars in the United States, known as The Catholic Biblical Association of America. There were 50 scholars involved, most, but not all of them Catholic. You should not be impressed by the number of scholars involved in any translation. The result is logically less consistency. Furthermore, given the number of scholars involved and the number of years involved, you must not think for a moment that we have 50 scholars working full-time for 25 years. You have the majority of these 50 people working now and again on this translation, some over a long period of time, which even lessens the likelihood of consistency of translation (I am not faulting this approved Catholic version here; any translation with these kinds of numbers will have built-in faults—just as 2 aspirin are good and 20 are bad, and just as too many cooks spoil the broth). This is approved for use by Roman Catholics.

**Date of Translation:** First complete translation was published in 1970. The complete job took 25 years (which actually takes us to the 1970 edition). A final edition was completed in the mid-1980's. For this *second edition*, a couple of years were spent on setting up guidelines and manuscripts were all due by November of 1980. These groups met an additional 50 times after the submission of the manuscripts to work on *accuracy and consistency of approach*.

**Stated Purpose:** On September 30, 1943, Pope Pius XII said that we needed an updated translation (what he actually said made little or no sense, but this apparently was the gist of it; refer to the preface of the NAB for the quotation). One of the overriding considerations of this translation was to convey the thoughts as well as the writing styles of the original authors. Like many other translations, the translators wanted a Bible which could be (1) read aloud, (2) read in private, and (3) studied.

**Note Concerning Manuscripts Used:** Being a non-Catholic, it was always my impression that the Catholic Church relied heavily upon the Latin Vulgate, a translation made by Saint Jerome from ancient Latin, Greek and Hebrew manuscripts into the Latin in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., which translation has become known to us as the Latin Vulgate. I had always assumed, in my ignorance, that all English translations approved by the Catholic Church were based upon this version. The classical Douay-Rheims version (1582–1610) and its revision in 1750, are certainly based upon the Latin Vulgate. However, this is apparently where that tradition ends. Although the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome was no doubt used in this translation, it was placed side by side the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, and textual criticism found its way into this translation (*textual criticism* is the study of what did the original author actually write in the first place, particularly when the text is unclear or if there are more than one version of a particular verse).

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The NAB used the negative found in the Greek of Judges 1:18, but then did not list the fourth town which was found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. The NAB more or less went with the Latin Vulgate and the Greek in Judges 2:3; instead of calling the inhabitants of the land *adversaries*, it reads: *they shall oppose you*. It went with the Greek in Judges 15:5. Although the New American Bible is a

Catholic translation, meaning that primarily the Latin Vulgate would be followed, Greek manuscripts were used and scholars from outside the Catholic church were a part of the collaboration process. A portion of Judges 16:13–14 is missing from the Hebrew, but is found in the Greek. Since I do not have the Latin Vulgate, I don't know if it is found there or not. In any case, the text is restored by the **NAB**, without a mention of any of this by way of footnote. The **NAB** tends to defer to the Greek text (e.g., Judges 17:10 18:17–18 19:18 1Sam. 4:1 Job 15:30), although not in every case (e.g., Judges 2:3 and part of 10:4). Portions of Esther (and I am guessing the apocryphal portions) were translation from the Greek. Now and again, the **NAB** does something which is inexplicable. 1Chron. 1:51a does not belong in Scripture, although it is a true statement. Rather than end the list of kings of Edom with this statement, the **NAB** has *After Hadad died...* as if there is more that belongs here, but they don't have it. They separate this half of the verse from the half which follows, which several Bibles do. However, they indicate, with those three dots, that there should be more, but they don't have it. This approach is unique to the **NAB** with regards to this half of a verse.

**1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NAB follows the Greek, which is what we would expect.

The translators of the **NAB** were also cognizant of the manuscripts discovered at Qumran (the Dead Sea Scrolls). In 1Sam. 1:22, Samuel is offered by his mother as a *Nazarite*, which is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Massoretic text. Interestingly enough, only the **NRSV** has the same rendering of the 20+ translations which I own. One fact which surprised me is that, in 1Sam. 2:20, there were two major changes which are found in the DSS and in the Septuagint, which are both reflected in the **NRSV** and in the **NAB**. However, interestingly enough, there is another dramatic change in v. 22 which the **NAB** at least acknowledges and the **NRSV** does not even mention. One line concerning illicit relations between the sons of Eli and women who served at the Ten of God is not found in the Dead Sea Scrolls nor in the Greek Septuagint. Although the **NAB** leaves it in, the translators bracket that line, calling it a gloss (meaning, it was added after the fact). The **NRSV** leaves this line in, unbracketed and without so much as a footnote. If you turn to that passage and read it, you may wonder, *what's the big deal?* The big deal is that the sin of Eli's sons involved their distortion of God's animal sacrifices, which spoke of our Lord. When a translator, despite the best evidence, has to include some line about them having sexual relations with the Levitical women, because that just seems like a greater sin, they minimize the actual wrongdoing of the two brothers. When one distorts the animal sacrifices, one is distorting the cross. This is a hell of a lot more important in the realm of sin than are immoral relations.

Once and awhile, the **NAB** does the inexplicable. In the middle of 1Sam. 2:8, they insert *He gives to the vower his vow, and blesses the sleep of the just.* Now, I don't find that line in any other translation, nor is it anywhere else in that chapter. For that reason, I would have liked a footnote telling me just exactly from whence the translators found this bonus line. My guess would be from the Latin.

#### **Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Apocrypha:** Although there was an Hebrew version of I Maccabees (it has been lost), the translation was made from the oldest Greek version of that book. Judith and II Maccabees were also rendered from the Greek, as is most of the Apocrypha. Apparently, Sirach was in Hebrew, although it was translated with an eye toward the Greek text (it appears, from the preface, that the Greek text overruled the Hebrew).

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** They depended upon the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Græce* as well as upon the 1966 *Greek New Testament* put together by Aland, Black, Metzger, and Wikgren.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments as well as the **apocrypha** (which is to be expected with any Bible approved by the Catholic Church). What they do not have from the apocrypha is 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees and 2 Esdras.

**Vocabulary:** This is not a dumbed-down translation. There were times that I had to look up this word or that, e.g., *ignominy* in 1Sam. 11:2. They used the verb *batten* in 1Sam. 2:5 (which will be discussed further down below). Generally speaking, the text flows well and this translation makes for an enjoyable read. Because the **NAB** is not a dumbed-down translation, there are occasions where one might describe the translation as having flair.

**Grade Level:** High school Sophomore and occasionally higher.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** It is unclear as to whether the translators see the original text as inspired. In 1Sam. 16–18, a footnote speaks of *the two traditions which describe the coming of David into Saul's service*.<sup>51</sup> This seems to imply that we have two traditions, and that one of these traditions is probably correct and the other is not. In their translation, they use brackets to indicate what is missing from the oldest Greek translation (which must be LXX β). However, later in the footnote, they tell us that both traditions are found in the *inspired text*. In fact, the latter portion of the footnote reads: *Both [traditions] are equally a part of the inspired text, as are also the various amplifications and retouchings of the narrative given within brackets in chs. 18 and 19*.<sup>52</sup> This implies to me that, even though they refer to the Massoretic text as the *inspired text*, they see it as having later been amplified and retouched, which implies that the text is not necessarily God's Word. On the other hand, just because an organization translates the Bible, but does not view the original text as God's Word, this does not mean that they cannot put out a good translation.

The NAB is one of the translations primarily composed by Catholic scholars. A strong tradition in the Catholic religion is that of *Christian* mystics. Although these mystics are not the Catholic equivalent of holy rollers, some do veer in that direction. There are times in this translation when such an influence is felt. In 1Sam. 10:10b, when the Hebrew tells us that Saul prophesied among the prophets, the NAB reads: *.....he joined them in their prophetic state*. While not as flagrant as some of the modern English translations, this rendering does allow a reader to lean in either direction (i.e., toward or away from mystical and/or charismatic doctrine). Whereas such a translation is not bad, it is still not altogether accurate, and it does reflect possibly a mystical if not a charismatic influence.

**Description of Translation:** The NAB is a rather free translation at times, functioning occasionally as a commentary rather than a translation. Once and awhile it softens what is found in the original language. In the Hebrew of Judges 19:2, a Levite's wife is said to *fornicate against him* or *commit adultery against him*; NAB reads: *was unfaithful to him*. Generally speaking, this translation tends to be more accurate and wordy than the NJB, which is not to say that it is accurate and wordy.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Essentially traditional, with the apocrypha thrown in. They often followed the verse numbering of the Hebrew rather than the Greek (for instance, for most psalms, the inscription in the Hebrew is v. 1; therefore, the NAB lists the inscriptions as v. 1).

**Strong Points:** This is a very readable translation. The divine nature of Christ Jesus is clearly taught in John 1:1–14. The nature of the suffering servant, Christ Jesus, is clear in Isa. 53. I find this version a more enjoyable read than, for instance, the TEV or the CEV (however, the chief difference is the latter two translations speak to a lower grade level).

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<sup>51</sup> *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. 605.

<sup>52</sup> *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. 605.



Unlike some modern translations, this version does not always dumb itself down. However, once and awhile, it does give us an odd bird of a translation: e.g., 1Sam. 2:5a, in the NAB, reads: **The well-fed hire themselves out for bread, while the hungry batten on spoil.** Just what the hell does it mean to *batten on spoil*? It means to fatten oneself on the spoil (i.e., the possessions—and, in this case, food—formerly belonging to your defeated enemies) taken in battle.

The oldest translation available to us, LXX  $\beta$ , leaves out about a third of 1Sam. 17. The NAB is one of the few translations which point this out and then place the questionable text in brackets. Although that text belongs in any English translation (as its lack leaves us with more problems than it quells), it is significant enough to footnote, which the NAB does.

**Weak Points:** Although in their preface, the editors claim that they strive for a literal and consistent translation, there are many times where the actual Hebrew has been obscured by the English translation. See below.

**Criticisms:** There are many times when the meaning of the original is disguised by this version. In Gen. 1:2, we have, in the Hebrew, *the Spirit of God*; or, at the very least, *the Wind of God*. The Hebrew for *God* is the oft used *Elohim*. The NAB renders this as *a mighty wind*. *Elohim* is **not** the word for *Almighty* or for *mighty*.

Let me give you another major criticism: their choice of which manuscript to follow is sometimes inexplicable. As you know, we have the Hebrew Massoretic text; we have the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament; we have manuscripts discovered in Qumran (the **Dead Sea Scrolls**); and we have a host of other ancient translations, called codices. Admittedly, if you have five different manuscripts giving five different readings, making a correct choice is rather difficult. However, in 1Sam. 6:3, the Hebrew says one thing and the Dead Sea Scrolls says something else, which is in agreement with the Greek Septuagint. Almost without thinking, when the Dead Sea Scrolls are in agreement with Greek, that is going to be my preference. Furthermore, the context of this passage is also more in keeping with Greek (see my exegesis of 1Sam. 6). So, what does the **NAB** do? They follow the Hebrew. Now, notice just how inconsistent they can be: in 1Sam. 6:19, they follow the Greek rather than the Hebrew, even though the Dead Sea Scrolls apparently support the Hebrew Massoretic text. Furthermore, the Hebrew text of v. 19 jives better with the context. My point is that the **NAB** can be terribly inconsistent, and not simply because one translation team does one portion of Scripture and another team does another, but that the same team of translators make several bad decisions in the same chapter of which manuscript to follow.

**Their Comments:** They found it necessary to rearrange some verses in the books of Job, Proverbs, Sirach (a member of the Apocrypha), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zechariah. The translators believe that they have good reason to rearrange certain verses and note it in their footnotes.

They see their Bible as more of a translation than a paraphrase, yet quickly add that all translations are essentially paraphrases.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1986 revision of the NAB, their primary aim was *to produce a version as accurate and faithful to the meaning of the Greek original as is possible for a translation*. An emphasis was made to have a very consistent rendering of individual Greek words, except when such a rendering was inappropriate.

The translators recognized that there was a movement afoot in today's society which sees Scripture as discriminatory towards women. While acknowledging this and expressing sympathy, my impression is that they attempted to please those on both sides of this issue. Where they saw passages which seemed to be inclusive of men and women, an attempt was made to translate this in such a way as to convey that. A problem which arises is that, at one time, *man*, in the English, referred to *men and women*. Today, for some it is still inclusive and for others, they view it as exclusive. In our Academy Awards, we still have the categories of *Best Actor* and *Best Actress*, and no one seems to be calling for a merging of these categories; however, in the same

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<sup>53</sup> This remark, along with all of the others, comes from their prefaces to the Old and New Testaments. In my Bible, this is: *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. xxxi–xxxvi.

proceedings, *actresses* are rarely called *actresses*, but they are now called *actors*. Although they tend to be fairly consistent here, having the two categories and yet calling everyone *actors* appears to be contradictory. Therefore, any Biblical translation which concerns itself with this issue is going to have trouble no matter what it does.

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry; prose looks like prose. One of the things which I particularly like about the psalms in the **NAB** is that they are separated into stanzas by roman numerals. So, with a glance, one can see how any given psalm is divided up. This may not seem like much, but almost all of the secular (and even non-secular) poetry we read is so written. Therefore, it would make sense for an English translation to treat the psalms in this fashion.

**Section Headings:** This depends upon the publisher, I believe. My old NAB has no section headings but it has bold headings at the top of every page (2 or 3) and each psalm has a heading as well. The headings for the narrative essentially tell you what is on that page.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** I found this Bible to be a very readable version, and I often used it in order to help explain what the author was saying, when such things were lost in the carefully accurate versions of Young and Rotherham.

Once and awhile, I come across a translation completely out of left field, e.g.:

Passage	NAB	NASB	Young's <i>Literal Translation</i>
Job 19:26	And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.	"Even after my skin is destroyed [lit., <i>which they have cut off</i> ], Yet from my flesh I shall see God;	And after my skin hath compassed this <i>body</i> , Then from my flesh I see God:
The <b>NAB</b> also transposes vv. 26–27.			

**Additional Features:** My **NAB** came as part of *The Complete Parallel Bible*; apart from a very occasional footnote, there are no additional features.

**Recommendations:** The **NAB** is a reasonable choice for a second Bible or a reading Bible. There are times when we go on vacation and we need a Bible that we can simply read, and the **NAB** fulfills that need.

**Additional Notes:** The **NAB** contains only one version of Esther: the longer, Greek version, with the additions generally thought to be apocryphal. The NAB also contains apocryphal material that has been added to the book of Daniel (Dan. 3:24–90, 14, 14). My *Complete Parallel Bible* does not include the full notes of the translators, which are apparently quite extensive and justify many of their choices and changes. The NAB follows the chapter and verse arrangement of the Hebrew rather than that of the KJV.

Some time ago, I picked up a copy of *The Complete Parallel Bible*, thinking to myself, "The **NRSV**, **REB**, **NAB** and **NJB**—that is an unusual grouping of translations." I no longer think that. Even though two of these are officially Catholic Bibles (i.e., they are accepted by the Catholic Church—the latter two) and two of them are protestant Bibles, they actually have a great deal in common. When the Septuagint offers an alternate reading, all four lean toward the Septuagint's reading. They all are influenced by **charismatics**/mystics. Also, all of them translate several books of the Apocrypha (the Protestant REB and the NRSV actually translate more books than the other two).



## The New American Standard Bible

**Version examined:** My version was originally copyrighted in 1960 and finally in 1975. I have the version before the *Thee's* and the *Thou's* (in reference to God) were updated. My recommendation is to find a version after these were updated into more modern English.

### Summation:

Of all the Bibles I own, when it comes to the translation alone, I most strongly recommend the NASB. It is a very accurate translation which is still relatively easy to read and understand. None of the other translations are able to straddle the perilous fence between a literal rendering, and one that is still readable, better than the NASB.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The New American Standard Bible

**Translators:** The Lockman Foundation. This is essentially the American Standard Version from 1901 with modernized English (there are some significant exceptions to this in the version that I possess).

**Date of Translation:** Late 1950's and the 1960's. The New Testament portion was published in 1960 and the entire Bible in 1971.

### Stated Purpose:

- (1) These publications shall be true to the original Hebrew and Greek.
- (2) They will be grammatically correct.
- (3) They will be understandable to the masses.
- (4) They will give the Lord Jesus Christ His proper place, the place which the Word gives Him; therefore, no work will ever be personalized.

**Manuscripts Used for the Old Testament:** The NASB generally follows Rudolph Kittel's *Biblica Hebraica*; however, they do pay some attention to the most recent information from Lexicography, cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Used Hebrew instead of Greek (Judges 1:18 2:3 1Sam. 4:1 Job 15:30). Did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NASB will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in that same passage. It went with the Septuagint in Judges 15:5 (actually, the NASB did the same as the KJV; they added in the *and*, which is in the Greek, but not the Hebrew, but they italicized it). There is a missing passage from Judges 16:13–14, which is found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. This is included in the translation of the NASB and appropriately footnoted. The NASB follows the MT when that appears to be the most reasonable (e.g., Judges 18:17–18). Once and awhile, the NASB would go with the MT even when it is not necessarily the most reasonable choice (e.g., 1Chron. 1:51a).

**Manuscripts Used for the New Testament:** Nestle's Greek New Testament along with the most recent information from Lexicography, the cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** *Glôssa* (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. Although I have always praised this translation, they did not translate *ekklêsía* (ἐκκλησία) [pronounced *ek-klay-SEE-ah*], properly in Acts 2:47 (in the NASB, it is rendered *number*). It means *church, assembly*. Strong's #1577.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Reasonably easy to understand English, as long as one has a vocabulary and can handle occasionally complex sentence structure (the NASB follows, as closely as possible, the sentence structure of the original Greek and Hebrew).

**Grade Level:** Sophomore or Junior in high school.

**Assumptions Made:** In the foreword, the Bible is referred to as *Scripture* and *Holy Scriptures*, indicating that the translators believed, on the whole, this to be the Word of God.

**Bias:** The thrust of this translation is to be a reasonably literal translation from the Hebrew and Greek into the English. Therefore, any bias that we find is probably found in the original text as well.

**Description of Translation:** Insofar as I am concerned, if you must own one translation of the Bible, this should be it. On the one hand, it is very faithful to the original Greek and Hebrew, giving often a word-for-word translation which is fairly consistent. However, it is also a very readable Bible, perhaps a notch or two less readable than **TEV**, **CEV** or the **NIV**, but this is only because it tends to be much more faithful to the original language; on the other hand, it is light years ahead of Young, Rotherham and the **KJV** when it comes to being readable. That being said, there are a handful of passages where they veer from the clear original. An example of this is Judges 21:22, where they render a portion of this verse: 'Give them [referring to the women of Shiloh] to us voluntarily.' The problem is that in the Hebrew and in the Greek, *them* is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person **masculine** plural, which refers to the men of Benjamin, and not to the wives they took, which would change up the translation at that point considerably (the **NKJV** renders this **Be kind to them** [the Benjamite males] **for our sakes**. This is a small, nevertheless, intentional misleading on the part of those who translated the **NASB**, conspicuous as such things are rarely done like this in this translation.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are capitalized, as are pronouns referring to Christ Jesus.

**Order of Translation:** Traditional.

**Strong Points:** When words are added to smooth out the translation, they are italicized. Serious consideration was given to the verb tenses found in the original Greek and Hebrew (they spend over a page in the preface explaining how these were handled).

**Weak Points:** Not very consistent. Even when there is clear precedent for a passage, e.g., Joshua 15:59b being found in the Septuagint, but missing in the MT, the **NASB** will occasionally leave this out as well.

A personal peeve of mine is the use of *Thee* and *Thou* throughout the **NASB** (on in reference to God). Most of the *new* or *revised* versions have dispensed with that archaic language, including the **NKJV**. Apparently, the **NASB** has also been updated (I have the original edition) and these Old English pronouns have been replaced with their newer English counterparts ( I would assume that whatever you buy off the shelf in a new book store will be the *updated* version). You might quickly check Heb. 10:7; if you find the word *Thy*, it is the older version; if you find the word *Your*, you have the updated version. In Heb. 10:5, it will even be more clear as to which version you are examining.

**Criticisms:** There are a variety of writing styles throughout the Bible, including narrative and doctrinal exposition. Sometimes, an understanding of the gist of the author's point is being able to flow from verse to verse seamlessly (i.e., as though there were no verses). There are several translations which do this quite admirably. The **NASB** is not one of them. Like the **KJV**, the **NASB** seems to be married to the verse separation imposed on Scripture early on. This is probably the weakest point of this translation, which is, whether you think so or not, a serious problem. The manmade separation of the Bible into chapters and verses is sometimes a very convenient, albeit misused, convention. However, there are many places where this does not work. In 1Chron. 5:1–2, for instance,

we have the continuation of a thought which should not be broken up. The chronicler is explaining why Reuben does not have the rights and privileges of the firstborn. This fell first to Joseph. However, *he* is also not accorded the position of firstborn, and the chronicler explains why in v. 2. The *he* at the end of v. 1 refers to Joseph, not to Reuben; however, this is confusing and easy to miss because of the verse separation. V. 1a properly should be a title for this chapter. V. 1b–2 are parenthetical and should be in smaller italicized type below the title or in parentheses below the title. Completely separating these verses, as does the KJV and the NKJV, is a mistake.<sup>54</sup> That being said, there is not a single contemporary version that I am aware of (including the CEV, the NLT and the TEV) which take advantage of the organization of this chapter and properly reflect this as a chapter heading rather than as the beginning of a sentence.

In Psalm 33:14–15, the latter verse continues the thought of the former. In the NASB, they are made to seem as though they are two separate verses, and two separate thoughts, which was not at all the intention of the original author.

My second complaint concerning the NASB is that, in one particular area, it was not updated enough. When referring to *God* in the second person, the NASB tends to return to Old English, using *Thee* and *Thou* and Old English forms of associated verbs (e.g., Psalm 44:3b–4a: *For Thou didst favor them. Thou art my King...*). Obviously, the intention is to show respect and honor, but there is no reason to have a separate vocabulary when referring to any member of the Godhead, as that is not the case in the original languages. One big improvement of the NKJV is that these Old English pronouns and associated verbs were updated altogether; Psalm 44:3b–4a: *Because You favored them. You are my King, O God;...*

**Their Comments:** *The editorial Board has a two-fold purpose in making this translation: to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures, and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage.*

**Layout:** My version of the NASB separates each and every verse. Under the *criticisms* above, I have listed why this is a problem. If this version is ever updated, this is the only serious place where they should revamp the translation. A paragraph should be treated like a paragraph, rather than as a series of verses (which, very often, are not even complete sentences). The NIV and the CEV (among others) deal with this issue as they should. The NASB does not. As I have mentioned previously, I do not know whether it is just my version of the NASB, or whether that is the case with all the flavors of this translation.

**Section Headings:** Italicized section headings are found throughout.

**Footnotes:** The NASB chose to produce a Bible without footnotes, and I fully understand the philosophy behind that—no one wants their footnotes to be taken as seriously as the text itself. Mostly what is found in the margins are Scriptural references. However, in roughly every other verse, they will occasionally have a note and indicate a more literal rendering of the text. In a few places, there will be a footnote and the Anglicized Hebrew word will be given. What is lacking in the NASB is important alternate readings or an indication that this or that verse was translated from the Greek rather than the Hebrew.

**Personal Comments:** Very readable, understandable modern English; not altogether consistent. However, it still stands as probably the best translation of the *modern* English versions of the Bible. Although it leans in close to being a very literal translation, it is also very readable (though certainly not as easy to read as the NIV, the NLT, or the CEV).

**Comments from others:** J. Vernon McGee mentioned that he believed that the American Standard Version (the predecessor to this version) was more accurate than the KJV.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> This may be in only my version of the NASB, as the ASB which I own does not separate them..

<sup>55</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Ruth*, Thru the Bible Radio, ©1976 in La Verne, California, p. 34.

**Additional Features:** One of the most important features of the NASB is their very short margin notes on different translations of various words as well as more literal renderings for words and phrases. I have owned my particular copy for over twenty years and just noticed today that there are no footnotes. However, the introductions to the various books are good, and some of the articles in the back are very good. It comes with a subject index and concordance, along with helpful charts, e.g., the Chronology of the Bible, the Parables and Miracles of our Lord, etc.

Margin notes are used to (1) indicate a more literal reading of the text; (2) indicate that a change to the text (e.g., its order) has been made in the translation; (3) to give alternate readings; (4) to indicate other passages of Scripture which might help to explain the Scripture referenced.

**Recommendations:** If you own just one English translation of the Bible, this should be it.

**Additional Notes:** When a New Testament writer quotes an Old Testament verse, it is written in small caps.

Although this is one of my favorite translations, ZPEB is not quite as complimentary. *This version has copious references in columns at the side of the pages. It has been criticized as being somewhat pedantic or arbitrary in the rendering of Greek tenses. On the whole, however, it is an excellent production and will no doubt have wide influential use.*<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 581.

## The New English Bible

Version examined:

Summation:

Preface:

Translation: The New English Bible<sup>57</sup>

**Translators:** Planned and directed by representatives of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Congregational church in England and Wales, the Council of Churches for Wales, the Irish Council of Churches, the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, the Methodist Church of Great Britain, the Presbyterian Church of England, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the National Bible Society of Scotland. In other words, this is an English (i.e., British) translation of Scripture.

Dr. C.H. Dodd was appointed General Director of this translation in 1949, and his personal theological views pervade this translation. In his book, *The Bible Today*, he says that the Old Testament ...contains incongruities and contradictions, not merely in matters of fact, but in spiritual outlook and moral evaluation.<sup>58</sup> In the same book, he writes, *The first chapter of Genesis is a relatively late composition. We have in the second chapter an earlier, and cruder, Hebrew story of creation. The account in the first chapter was written after the prophets had done their great work toward a purer and more spiritual religion.*<sup>59</sup> In fact, Dodd rejects much of what is supernatural in the Bible, also writing: *Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge and the Building of Babel are symbolic myths. The Last Judgment and the End of the World, if they are not in the strict sense myths, have a similar symbolic character.*<sup>60</sup> Dodd does not subscribe the Mosaic authorship, and even appears to question what we know of Moses' life and existence. *Moses has left us no writings, and we know little of him with certainty. But it is scarcely questionable that the Hebrew religion, before the time when its literature begins, had felt the impulse of some tremendous personality. Tradition calls him Moses, and so may we. We are not, however, in direct touch with him, but only with men who drew their inspiration from the impulse he communicated.*<sup>61</sup> Obviously, Dodd disagrees with the several New Testament passages where Moses is called the author of at least Exodus through Deuteronomy (Matt. 8:4 Mark 10:4–5 12:26 Luke 16:29 John 7:19 II Cor. 3:15); most of these statements are ascribed to our Lord. If we cannot hold to what our God said, what can we depend upon? And, finally: *Moses was a magician, a medicine man, whose magic wand wrought wonders of deliverance and destruction...To separate history from legend in the stories of his career is impossible and not very profitable.*<sup>62</sup>

Moser gives a number of other quotations which clearly reveal the liberal bend of Dodd, who was the chairman of the committee of the translators of ***The New English Bible***. There are quotes which indicate that Dodd does not believe that all of the quotes attributed to our Lord should be; nor does he ascribe to the verbal plenary

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<sup>57</sup> All that I have covered in this portion is the introduction to the Old Testament.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. C.H. Dodd, *The Bible Today* (p. 10); taken from M.L. Moser, Jr.; *The New English Bible Satan's Polluted Translation*; The Challenge Press; Little Rock. AR, ©1971, p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. C.H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible* (p. 27); taken from M.L. Moser, Jr.; *The New English Bible Satan's Polluted Translation*; The Challenge Press; Little Rock. AR, ©1971, p. 62.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.



interpretation of Scripture. Personally, none of this would matter to me if he translated the Scriptures accurately and carefully; however, that is not the case.

**Date of Translation:** The New Testament was published in 1961. Published first in 1970. The wheels were set into motion in May 1946 by the Reverend G. S. Hendry, who recommended to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, that a more modern translation of the Bible be undertaken, the language of the KJV having become archaic. The General Assembly approached the other churches with the idea that an entirely new translation be undertaken, rather than a simple revision of the KJV, which had been contemplated by the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge. For the second and third meetings, a large number of churches and organizations had become involved. The Roman Catholic Church in both England and Scotland had also been invited to participate; they appointed representatives much later who attended as observers.

**Stated Purpose:** These churches and organizations felt that the translators should be free to employ a contemporary idiom rather than to reproduce the traditional 'Biblical' English. C. H. Dodd wrote in a memorandum: *It is to be genuinely English in idiom, such as will not awaken a sense of strangeness or remoteness. Ideally, we aim at a "timeless" English, avoiding equally both archaisms and transient modernisms. The version should be plain enough to convey its meaning to any reasonably intelligent person (so far as verbal expression goes), yet not bald or pedestrian. It should not aim at preserving "hallowed" associations; it should aim at conveying a sense of reality. It should be as accurate as may be without pedantry. It is to be hoped that, at least occasionally, it may produce arresting and memorable renderings. It should have sufficient dignity to be read aloud...We should like to produce a translation which may receive generally recognition as an authoritative second version alongside the A.V. for certain public purposes as well as for private reading, and above all a translation which may in some measure remove a real barrier between a large proportion of our fellow-countrymen and the truth of the Holy Scriptures.*<sup>63</sup>

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of R. Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). There are times that the NEB will follow the Hebrew text instead of Greek (Judges 1:18 1Sam. 1:14) and the Greek instead of the Hebrew (Job 15:30). They do not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. In Judges 2:3, it does not appear as though they followed the Hebrew, Latin or the Greek manuscripts. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NEB will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. It went with the Greek, rather than the Hebrew, in Judges 15:5, rendering it *vineyards and olive groves*, rather than *orchard of the olive*. There is a missing passage from Judges 16:13–14, which is found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. This is included in the translation of the NASB and appropriately footnoted. They followed the Massoretic text if that was the most appropriate (e.g., Judges 18:17–18) and the Greek where that appeared to be the most reasonable (Judges 19:18). In other words, if it is not obvious that there was some sort of a scribal error, then the Septuagint is not given preference over the MT. However, there were times that they added in their own interpretation, following the Massoretic text. Although 1Chron. 1:51a does not belong in Scripture, they leave it there, and indicate that the chiefs of the following verses came after the kings of the previous verses. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NEB follows the Greek, as we would expect it to.

In Job 15:11–12, this translation follows the Hebrew in v. 11 and the Greek in v. 12a.

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NEB
<b>Job 15:11</b>	[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?	You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	Does not the consolation of God suffice you, a word whispered quietly in your ear?

<sup>63</sup> Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 427–428; they took it from T. H. Robinson's "A New Translation of the English Bible," *The Bible Translator* 2 (Oct., 1951); p. 168.

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NEB
<b>Job 15:12</b>	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash!	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	What makes you so bold at heart, and why do your eyes flash, [that you vent your anger at God and pour out such a torrent of words?]

Several of the manuscripts continue the thought of Job 15:12 into v. 13 (which begins with kîy (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *that, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471).

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** Although many translations at first seem hesitant to name a particular Greek version, the NEB finally identified *The Greek New Testament*, edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1964) as their primary source. They write: *In assessing the evidence, the translators have taken into account (a) ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, (b) manuscripts of early translations into other languages, and (c) quotations from the New Testament by early Christian writers. These three sources of evidence are collectively referred to as 'witnesses.'*

**Notes on the New Testament Translations:** In I Cor. 13–14, *tongues* (or, *languages*) is rendered *ecstatic utterances*. Although this is certainly the understanding of this passage by **charismatics**, it was never thought to be anything other than *languages* until the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when theologians were trying to remove the miracles from Scripture due to their predispositions. They therefore determined that *tongues* here referred to the psychological pagan tongue speaking which occurred in the mystery religions.<sup>64</sup> Actually, they translate the same word, glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], as *tongues* (I Cor. 13:1), *tongues of ecstasy* (I Cor. 13:8 14:5), *language of ecstasy* (I Cor. 14:1), *ecstatic language* (I Cor. 14:6), and *ecstatic utterance* (I Cor. 12:28 14:40).

**Portion Translated:** Three different panels were appointed to translate the Old Testament, the **apocrypha** and the New Testament. These were scholars drawn from various British universities. *Apprehending, however, that sound scholarship does not necessarily carry with it a delicate sense of English style, the Committee appointed a fourth panel, of trusted literary advisers, to whom all the work of the translating panels was to be submitted for scrutiny. It should be said that denominational considerations played no part in the appointment of the panels.*<sup>65</sup>

**Vocabulary:** This is an English Bible, so you would expect it to be at least somewhat erudite; probably at the level of a high school senior. Being English, there will be some Anglicanisms which will obfuscate the meaning for Americans, e.g., *cudgels* rather than *clubs*, *put to rout* rather than *scattered*, and *mealtub* rather than *bushel* (Matt. 26:47, Luke 1:51, and Matt. 5:15, respectively).<sup>66</sup>

### Grade Level:

**Assumptions Made:** The Old Testament was composed between *the twelfth and the second century BC, and much of it, e.g., the genealogies, poems and stories, must have been handed down by word of mouth for many generations*. The introduction admits to scattered references to various texts, but balances that with the fact that we have *no idea how extensive or widely current these may have been*. No manuscript has survived *the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews into exile in 587/6 B.C.*

<sup>64</sup> See Robert H. Gundry, "Ecstatic Utterance (N.E.B.)?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 17, 1966, pp. 299–307.

<sup>65</sup> *New English Bible*; Oxford University Press, © 1970, p. v of the Preface. All of the portions which are italicized came from this Preface or from the Introduction.

<sup>66</sup> Examples taken from Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 428.

Because the vowel points were added and various systems had been revised until that of the Rabbis of Tiberias made in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. prevailed, the translators felt free to discard these in order to *re-vocalize the consonantal text wherever that seemed desirable*, the *consonants, however, were generally regarded as unalterable* by the scribes, rabbis and Massorites.

The text of the Old Testament was virtually unaltered from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century on, however our earliest manuscripts of the Massoretic text dates back to the 9th through 11th centuries AD. *The Hebrew text as thus hand down is full of errors of every kind due to defective archetypes and successive copyists' errors, confusion of letters (of which several in the Hebrew alphabet are singularly alike), omissions and insertions, displacements of words and even of whole sentences or paragraphs; and copyists' unhappy attempts to rectify mistakes have often only increased the confusion.*

The headings which have been prefixed to the Psalms are of doubtful value, were probably added at a later date; or they are unintelligible musical directions. The Syriac version has totally different headings, so these headings have been eliminated.

Although the Massorites only recognized Job, Psalms and Proverbs as poetry, Kittel saw some of the prophetic books as poetry mixed with prose, and so translated. The NEB generally goes along with Kittel. Although the speakers are not distinguished in the original text of the Song of Solomon, two manuscripts of the Septuagint do so (although not always correctly) and NEB also differentiates the speakers.

The translation of the Septuagint is generally reasonable in the Pentateuch; however other books, particularly poetical ones, contain even absurdities.

**Bias:** There appears to be a clear liberal bias in **NEB's** translation. There are several places where the trinity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection and the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah are watered down. In some cases, where there is a legitimate reason to have two different choices for a translation, the **NEB** translators chose that which would favor the liberal *Christian* theologian. There were several passages where the theological bias was clear, even though there was no reason for the particular translation given. Examples of this will be covered below.

An extremely important bias is evident in Gen. 11:1, which begins with the phrase, *ONCE UPON A TIME* in the **NEB**. This lends the impression that what is to follow, the confounding of human languages by God, is somewhat of a fairy tale or a story from which we might get some greater and other meaning.

The influence of the **charismatic movement** is seen in a half-dozen or more translations, including this one. In 1Sam. 10:10b, we read: *...the spirit of God suddenly took possession of him, so that he too was filled with prophetic rapture.*

**Description of Translation:** This is a modern, British translation; they do not lean toward a simple translation and occasionally use an Old English phrase or word.

**Capitalization:** The pronouns associated with deity are not capitalized. There are various Messianic passages where many translations capitalize that which refers to the Messiah; the **NEB** sometimes does and sometimes does not.

**Order of Translation:** The NEB follows the order of the KJV and the RSV rather than that of the Hebrew text. Paragraphing and versing also came from the KJV and RSV's.

**Strong Points:** Very literate and readable.

**Weak Points:** Occasionally inaccurate often revealing a liberal, theological bend.

**Criticisms:** ZPEB give the **NEB** its most common criticism: ...*it lacks theological precision and awareness, and in crucial texts betrays a distinctly liberal bias.*<sup>67</sup> One example they give is the **NEB** rendering of Gen. 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your brood and hers. They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel.” Most conservative theologians take this as a reference to Messiah, and translate the final line: “He will strike at your head and you will strike at His heel.” The **NEB** arbitrarily changed the singular in the Hebrew into a plural.

According to M. L. Moser Jr., the **NEB** weakens the witness of the Bible to the Deity of Jesus Christ and does damage to the authenticity of the prophecies found in Scripture. He feels so strongly about this translation that he wrote a small book (or a large pamphlet) with the rather melodramatic name *The New English Bible Satan's Polluted Translation*.<sup>68</sup> At first, because of the name of the booklet, I must admit to being put off, thinking to myself that this was just some other KJV-only nut; however, Moser has many valid points, which I will draw from briefly here.<sup>69</sup> In Isa. 7:14, where it reads (in the **KJV**): *Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;* the **NEB** reads instead, *Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and she will call him Immanuel.* Admittedly, the translation is weaker here and could reflect some liberal bias. What follows in Moser's booklet is a reasonable explanation (11 pages) as to the Hebrew word in question (over which there has always been some debate).

There are areas where Moser has some reasonable comments. Isa. 9:6, from the **NEB**: *For a boy has been born for us, a son given to us to bear the symbol of domination on his shoulder; and he shall be called in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time, Prince of Peace.* Certainly the teaching of the deity of Christ has been weakened by their translation there and two of the titles, which are found in most other translations, are not represented as titles by the **NEB**. The teaching of Christ's deity is weakened in several passages, e.g. Psalm 45:6: the **KJV** reads: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.* The **NEB** reads: *Your throne is like God's throne, eternal, your royal sceptre a sceptre of righteousness.* This verse is quoted in Heb. 1:8–9, where God is speaking to the Son of God. Interestingly enough, the **NEB** correctly renders this in Hebrews; it reads: *Of the angels he says, 'He who makes his angels winds, and his ministers a fiery flame'; but of the Son, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of justice is the sceptre of his kingdom. Thou hast loved right and hated wrong; therefore, O God, thy God has set thee above thy fellows, by anointing with the oil of exultation.'* (Heb. 1:6–8). However, at the same time, the **NEB** softens this passage in Hebrews with the footnote: *Or, God is thy throne for ever and ever, and thy sceptre.*<sup>70</sup> One verse which is very different from the **KJV**, by one important word is Matt. 1:23; the **KJV** reads: *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.* The **NEB** reads instead: *The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel; a name which means 'God is with us'* (emphasis mine). You note that in the **NEB**, the deity of Christ is not to be understood or necessarily inferred from Matt. 1:23. Other passages where the deity and /or purpose of Christ is lessened by the translation of the **NEB**: Psalm 45:11 110:1 Micah 5:2 Zech. 6:13 9:9 Mal. 3:1 Rom. 9:5<sup>71</sup>.

The clear bodily resurrection to which Job looks to is not as clearly a bodily resurrection in Job 19:26. The **KJV**: *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* The **NEB**: “*And I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself, whom I shall see with my own eyes, I myself and no other.*” We have a similar change in Job 14:14: the **KJV**: *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* The **NEB**: *If thou wouldst fix a limit for my time there, and then remember me! Then I would not lose hope, however long my service, waiting for my relief to*

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<sup>67</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 581.

<sup>68</sup> This was, at one time, available from *The Challenge Press*, PO Box 5567; Little Rock, Arkansas; 72205. I have no idea if this is still a going concern (the 70 page booklet was published back in 1971).

<sup>69</sup> In fact, I used many of his criticisms as a starting point for examining the other translations.

<sup>70</sup> *New English Bible The New Testament*; Oxford University Press, © 1970, p. 373.

<sup>71</sup> The translation of this verse is debatable.

come. The **NASB**: “If a man dies, will he live *again*? All the days of my struggle I will wait, Until my change comes. Again, the bodily resurrection found in most translations is missing from the **NEB**.

Zech. 13:6 (**KJV**): And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. **NEB**: ‘What’, someone will ask, ‘are these scars on your chest?’ And he will answer, “I got them in the house of my lovers.’ Young, who is known for being slavishly literal, renders this: And *one* hath said unto him, ‘What *are* those wounds in thy hands?’ And he hath said, ‘Because I was smitten *at home* by my lovers.’ As you can see here, both the **KJV** and the **NEB** are each half right. The Old Testament teaching of the cross and the Messiah to come appears to be lost or compromised in the **NEB**’s rendering of Gen. 49:10 Psalm 22:16 69:21 Isa. 53:9–10 Zech. 12:10.

There are some areas where their change of the translation is inexcusable. The **NEB**, Isa. 48:16: Draw near to me and hear this: from the beginning I have never spoken in secret; from the moment of its first happening I was there. And then the verse ends. The **NASB** reads: “Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now, the Lord God [lit., Jehovah] has sent Me, and His Spirit.” I must admit that I immediately went to my Septuagint to see if that latter portion of the verse was missing in the Greek. In my version, the *beta* Septuagint, the second sentence is there. My point being that the **NEB** had no strong reason to leave this out apart from theological predisposition.<sup>72</sup>

There are some areas where the rendering of the **NEB** is inexplicable. For instance, Matt. 16:18, in the **KJV**, reads: And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The **NEB**: And I say this to you: You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall never conquer it. The **NEB** version does not better translate this passage, nor does it help to explain the play on words which is found here. However, it does give greater credence to the Catholic doctrine that the Catholic Church is built upon the foundation of Peter.

Now, if I have whet your appetite and you are able to obtain a copy of Moser’s book, bear in mind that not every comment that he makes is on target. For instance, Moser gives a list of verses in the **KJV** which were left out of the **NEB**. In most cases, the **NEB** was depending upon the better manuscripts. The same can be said for words and phrases found in the **KJV** but not in the **NEB**; the **KJV** was based upon inferior and fewer manuscripts. One of the most important facts to come out of the careful examination of manuscript evidence is that most of the last chapter of Mark does not belong in the Bible, but was added sometime after the original manuscript was written. We should not sacrifice scholarship for tradition.

**Their Comments:** *The older translators, on the whole, considered that fidelity to the original demanded that they should reproduce, as far as possible, characteristic features of the language in which it was written, such as the syntactical order of words, the structure and division of sentences, and even such irregularities of grammar as were indeed natural enough to authors writing in the easy idiom of popular Hellenistic Greek, but less natural when turned into English. The present translators were enjoined to replace Greek constructions and idioms by those of contemporary English...In doing our work, we have constantly striven to follow our instructions and render the Greek, as we understood it, into the English of the present day, that is, into the natural vocabulary, constructions, and rhythms of contemporary speech. We have sought to avoid archaism, jargon, and all that is either stilted or slipshod. It should be said that our intention has been to offer a translation in the strict sense, and not a paraphrase, and we have not wished to encroach on the field of the commentator. But if the best commentary is a good translation, it is also true that every intelligent translation is in a sense a paraphrase. The line between translation and paraphrase is a fine one.*

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry, prose like prose.

Now, despite all of this fancy layout and the options available to the translators, they fall short in many areas. The psalms have titles and they also have parenthetical information which is properly formatted (like so many

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<sup>72</sup> It is possible that the latter half of this verse is missing from the *alpha* Septuagint.

translations do, including the KJV). However, there are areas where such formatting should be applied, and is not. In the first nine chapters of 1Chronicles, we have a list of various genealogies. Each of these is properly titled in the original and at least one of them (Reuben's) has a parenthetical statement as we find in the psalms. However, the NEB translators do not appear to be aware of this and they must add a great deal of additional verbiage to make the first couple words of 1Chron. 5:1 blend in with that which follows. Furthermore, that which is parenthetical and would have been better served in italics or smaller print right below the title, is not properly reformatted in any such way. If we are going to go with modern formatting, then we should allow for Scripture to lead us to do it correctly. Of all the *modern* translations, this is one of the few that makes a meager stab at rendering some titles as titles. In 1Chron. 6:1a, the title of this chapter is capitalized. Why the rest of the genealogies were not treated similarly is beyond me.

**Section Headings:** There are page headings.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** My notes from the margin of the preface: In an era where we, as ordinary believers, are invisible heroes and must live by the Word of God, this precise meaning of the NT is essential. In the OT, only certain men were heroes, and only they required an accurate rendering of the Scriptures (and most of them had it). Many of them received direct revelation. The translation itself is very much a commentary—and a very liberal one at that—rather than a word for word translation; however, it is a very readable translation, designed for the person who desires to read the Bible for himself.

One of the doctrines which believers rightly adhere to is the fact of the virgin birth of the man Jesus. Part of the area of controversy is Isa. 7:14, which reads: *Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin [or, maiden] will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (NASB).* The **NEB** reads: *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: A young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and will [or, you will] call him Immanuel [That is, God with us].* The word in question is the feminine noun *ʿl-mâh* (עַלְמָה) [pronounced *ah<sup>l</sup>-MAW*], and, according to BDB, this means *a young woman, a maid, or someone who is newly married.* For those who would like an outstanding and very complete examination of this word, I would heartily recommend *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; pp. 2349–2350 (he calls this the single most controversial word in the Old Testament). What is clear in the New Testament is that Jesus was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18, 25 Luke 1:31, 34). Furthermore, it is not much of a sign, if a young woman bears a male-child. This was a pretty common occurrence. On the other hand, there are disagreements as to the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew words. There is nothing in Scripture which indicates that *ʿl-mâh* must mean *virgin*; nor is there anything to contradict that (although this word might be used of young boys with high voices in the Psalms). The result is that some versions of the Bible render this word *young woman* and others *virgin*. Strong's #5959 BDB #761.

There are times when this translation is insightful; and times when it is very readable but inaccurate. Like many of the *thought-for-thought* translations, one must bear in mind that, on the one hand, the NEB will be a very readable translation; on the other hand, do not try to make some controversial theological point by quoting the NEB. Some examples below (these are not necessarily examples of where the NEB is particularly good or bad; they just give you an idea as to the liberties which they typically took with the text):

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NEB
Psalm 10:5	Strong are his ways in all times. High Your judgments from his sight. All his enemies, he puffs in them.	His ways are profaned at all times; Your judgments are removed from before him; he will gain the mastery over all his enemies.	His ways are always devious; thy judgements are beyond his grasp [Heb., <i>on high before him</i> ], and he scoffs at all restraint.

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NEB
Psalm 10:8	He sits in ambush in villages; in hiding, he murders an innocent [one]. His eyes for a hapless [one] they lurk;	He lies in wait with rich [men] in secret places in order to kill the innocent. His eyes are set against the poor.	He lies in ambush in the villages and murders innocent men by stealth. He is watching intently for some poor wretch;...

I'm glancing through what I have written so far on the **New English Bible**, thinking, that's a lot written about a Bible you probably can't even find. Let me add one thing: the **REB** appears to be a more readable translation than the **NEB** (the **REB** appears to be an updated version of the **NEB**, although I have been unable to confirm or deny that via the preface to the **REB**). Here's an example of a passage which makes slightly more sense in the **REB**:

Passage	NEB	REB
Psalm 73:7–12	<p>Their eyes gleam through folds of fat; while vain fancies pass through their minds. Their talk is all sneers and malice; scornfully they spread their calumnies. Their slanders reach up to heaven, while their tongues ply to and fro on earth. And so my people follow their lead and find nothing to blame in them, even though they say, 'What does God know? The Most High neither knows nor cares.' So wicked men talk, yet still they prosper, and rogues amass great wealth.</p>	<p>Their eyes gleam through folds of fat, while vain fancies flit through their minds. Their talk is all mockery and malice; high-handedly they threaten oppression. Their slanders reach up to heaven, while their tongues are never still on earth. So the people follow their lead and find in them nothing blameworthy. They say, 'How does God know? Does the Most High know or care?' Such are the wicked; unshakeably secure, they pile up wealth.</p>
Psalm 73:23–24	<p>Yet I am always with thee, thou holdest my right hand; thou does guide me by thy counsel and afterwards wilt receive me with glory.</p>	<p>Yet I am always with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me by your counsel and afterwards you will receive me with glory.</p>

In any case, you can see that the similarities between the two translations suggests a relationship.

**Additional Features:** There are footnotes dealing with the translation and occasionally giving the alternate rendering that one might find in the Massoretic text (the Hebrew).

**Recommendations:** As a piece of literature, the **NEB** is fine; do not depend upon it for theological studies or arguments, however.

**Additional Notes:** The way the translation was done was quite interesting. One of the panel members, and, occasionally, someone not on the panel, was *invited to submit* (this preface is soo British) his translation of a particular book or books. This draft was circulated among the members of the panel and then they met to discuss this translation verse by verse and sentence by sentence. The translation was discussed until they reached a consensus. When alternative renderings which were deemed sufficiently important occurred, these were footnoted. *There is probably no member of a panel who has not found himself obliged to give up, perhaps with lingering regret, a cherished view about the meaning of this or that difficult passage, but in the end the panel accepted corporate responsibility for the interpretation set forth in the translation adopted.* This rendering was

submitted to the fourth panel, who also examined it verse by verse, attempting to *secure...the tone and level of language appropriate to the different kinds of writing...whether narrative, familiar discourse, argument, law, rhetoric or poetry*. This revision was returned to the original panel for them to determine if the meaning of the original had been correctly understood. The two panels came to an agreement and submitted the final draft to the Joint Committee. At least two of the Joint Committee chairmen died during this undertaking, which exceeded two decades in scope.

*The translators have resorted to a paraphrase when the original Hebrew word or phrase does not lend itself to literal reproduction; but they have generally given that in a note. They have also, on the one hand, here and there expanded a Hebrew idiom to a voice a Hebraism likely to be unintelligible to English readers.*

Occasionally, there is a misleading footnote. In 1Sam. 9:24, the Hebrew is a bit confusing as there is a word found there which is found nowhere else in Scripture. NEB's rendering of that verse is reasonable: **So the cook took up the whole haunch and leg and put it before Saul; and Samuel said, 'Here is the portion of meat kept for you. Eat it; it has been reserved for you at this feast to which I have invited the people.'** *Portion of meat* is footnoted as the probable reading, noting that the Hebrew reads: *what is left over*. This is not what the Hebrew actually reads. A reasonably literal rendering of the Hebrew is: **Then the cook took up the leg and the portion attached and set [it] before Saul. Then he [Samuel] said, "Look, the portion set aside is being placed before you—eat, since to the appointed time [it] [the meat] was kept for you, saying the people I have assembled."** **And so Saul ate with Samuel on that day.** Although the Hebrew is clunky and there is probably a better sense to be found in the Greek of this passage, the footnote misleads us as to what the Hebrew actually says. Again, the NEB is a literal, very readable translation—just do not base any point of doctrine upon its rendering or its footnotes.



## **New International Reader's Version**

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:**

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The New International Version

### Version examined:

#### Summation:

The NIV strikes a good balance between a literal translation and a readable translation; between a translation which is easy to understand, without being dumbed-down to the lowest common denominator. That it is such a good translation is one of the two reasons it now is the best-selling translation of the Bible.

### Preface:

**Translation:** NIV; I personally use the NIV Study Bible, which has a great many additional features which help to recommend it. I also own *the Narrated Bible*, which is a chronological version of the NIV. I personally prefer it to the KJV-based *Reese Chronological Bible*.

### Translators:

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** The NIV seems to generally follow the Hebrew rather than the Greek (Judges 1:18 2:3 Job 15:30). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NEB will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. In Judges 15:5, the NIV went with the Greek rather than the Hebrew. There is a portion of Scripture found in the Septuagint which is obviously missing from the MT in Judges 16:13–14. The NIV include this, although mixes it up with the rest of the verse in its more freely translated style. They do allude to the insertion of this missing portion in a footnote, however. If there is simply a difference between the Greek and the Hebrew texts in the Old Testament, the NIV will go with the MT, if they deem that there is no obvious scribal error (e.g., Judges 18:17–18, Judges 19:18 1Chron. 1:51a). In 1Chron. 1:51a, v. 51 is separated into two paragraphs, as several translations do.

**1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NIV follows the Hebrew, but footnotes the Greek.

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλωσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Not extensive, but not overly-simplified either.

**Grade Level:** Freshmen High school level.

## Assumptions Made:

**Bias:** Although the NIV has rendered *glôssa* as *tongues* rather than as *languages* or *dialects*, this is their only concession to the charismatic groups. The clear meaning of the word *tongues* in context is *dialects* and their copious notes on I Cor. 14 emphasize that what Paul wants to hear in church is language that the hearers understand. In a related passage, 1Sam. 10:10b, Saul is prophesying among a group of prophets; he is not said to have fallen into some *prophetic frenzy*, as one translation rendered it.

**Description of Translation:** While more of an interpretation than a translation, the NIV is very readable and reasonably accurate. There is some softening of the Hebrew now and again; where it tells us in the Hebrew that the Levite's mistress *fornicated against him* or *committed adultery against him*; the NIV merely tells us that *she was unfaithful to him*.

## Capitalization:

## Order of Translation:

## Strong Points:

**Weak Points:** I would not unequivocally stand upon any given verse and say, "This is exactly what the Bible says." It is more of a thought-for-thought translation rather than a word-for-word translation. That is, we don't see a whole lot of consistency between the Hebrew and the English. That being said, the rendering is still quite good. To give you some examples of where the translators did more interpretation than translation:

Passage	Literal Hebrew	NIV
Job 20:28	Let Him carry away produce of his house— they will be poured out in a day of His nostril.	A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.

Now, my capitalization of *Him* and *His* in this verse is by way of interpretation. However, capitalized or not, those words are there. There is no word for *flood* or *rushing waters* in the original Hebrew.

Sometimes the freedom of the NIV can result in a misunderstanding of Scripture. For instance, the Ark of God remained at Kiriath-Jearim for 60–100 years. However, it appears as though it was there for only 20 years from the NIV's rendering: *It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath-Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD.*

**Criticisms:** There are many times when the translators of the NIV interpret Scripture for you. In Job 16:9, where Job appears to be shifting the blame for his pain and misery from God to Satan, the NIV obscures this subtle transition by attributing the assault on Job to God: *God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.* There is, in fact, no word for *God* in this verse in either the original Hebrew (or even in the Greek translation of same). This is simply inserted by way of *interpretation* by the translators of the NIV. Now, you might think, *What's wrong with that? I better understand the passage because of the liberties which they have taken?* You better understand their interpretation of the passage. That *God* is the subject of Job 16:9 is a matter of debate and has been for some time, with theologians attributing the action of this verse to God, to Satan and to Eliphaz (one of Job's associates). The NIV translation removes the basis for debate among those who read it exclusively, but does not necessarily correctly solve this reference.<sup>73</sup>

Just as with the translation, one cannot put complete trust in their notes as well. Their translation of 1Sam. 15:29a reads: *He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind;...* The footnote dealing with *Glory of Israel*

<sup>73</sup> Albert Barnes spends a considerable amount of time—over a page—discussing this point in *Barnes' Notes; Job*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 291–292.

reads: *A title of God used elsewhere only in Mic 1:15...* The problem is that, whereas the correct translation of Micah 1:15 is *Glory of Israel*, that is not the correct rendering in 1Sam. 15:29. It is accurately rendered the *Enduring of Israel*. My point is, because the translation is not accurate, the footnote is also inaccurate. Don't misunderstand this criticism—I am not saying that all of the commentary footnotes in the NIV Study Bible are incorrect; a small percentage are. The footnotes found in the NIV Study Bible are second only to Scofield's and vastly superior to those found in The Promise (**CEV**) and the Open Bible (**NLT**).

### **Their Comments:**

**Layout:** In the Old and New Testaments, there is a center column of Scriptural references; on the bottom of each page is a running commentary/list of comments. The Scripture is in a two column format on each page, with the Scripture being separated by paragraphs which are not necessarily determined by the verse beginnings and endings (that is, a new paragraph may occur mid-verse). Poetry looks like poetry and prose looks like prose.

**Section Headings:** Section headings are in a larger, italicized print within the text.

**Footnotes:** All Bibles, just about, have Scriptural references throughout. What I have found is that my Scofield KJV, my NKJV, my NASB and Barnes' commentary pretty much suggest the same reference passages (they are not exactly the same, but they are fairly close most of the time). The NIV Study Bible diverges from this fairly consistent set of references and offers a number of very original and often interesting references. This yields a positive and negative result: if we have studied the Bible for a reasonable amount of time previously in another version, and, when studying a portion of the NIV, we decide to examine the Scriptural references, we are often sent to places that we do not expect. For instance, in Job 16:2, Job calls his friends *miserable comforters*. Logically, this would parallel the passage where he calls them *worthless physicians*. In all of the sources I named, I would have that particular passage suggested (Job 13:4). The NIV Study Bible, on the other hand, suggests Psalm 69:20 (not suggested by any of those Bibles which I named), which is a marvelous parallel passage where David looks and cannot find any comforters; however, the NIV Study Bible does not suggest Job 13:4. It is as though the ones putting this Bible together said, "Okay, Bibles have traditionally referenced this passage or that passage for this verse; so, what can we offer instead?" My point in all of this is that the NIV Study Bible does offer some good references to pursue, but you may want to also have another version around to send you on the more conventional path as well.

On the plus side of Scriptural references, when I was searching for phrases similar to *God is with him* in the Old Testament, I was able to follow the references through the NIV Study Bible to find almost all of them (not all from one referenced footnote, but from looking at several of them). In the other Bibles mentioned above, I could not even find half of the similar references, no matter how many footnotes I followed out.

The NIV Study Bible carries three types of footnotes: the first type are the passage references, and the NIV Study Bible tends to list different Scriptural references than I find in most other Bibles—sometimes they are on target and sometimes they are not, but they do provide what appears to be a somewhat original view. The way these references are set up are excellent. Each footnote is denoted by a superscript, lowercase, italicized letter, going through the entire alphabet; and in the center columns, the verse is listed in boldface, then the superscript, and then the Scriptural references. Looking at these references from the text or from the center column is equally easy. Whereas, if you start in the Scriptural reference column in *The Emphasized Bible* or in the NRSV, you will search sometimes will a magnifying glass to determine what verse is being referenced, determining the verse of origin is easy in the NIV Study Bible.

At the bottom of the page is another listing of the verses with somewhat of a running commentary. There are no reference superscripts in the text of the verses themselves; however, so that we know what exactly is being explained or amplified, the NIV Study Bible will list the phrase under consideration in italics in the footnote below.

Below the middle column footnotes, and generally off to the right, are another set of footnotes. These use alphabetic, boldface superscripts and are not as easy to backtrack and find. The information here deals with

strictly the translation, and the editors of the NIV Study Bible give alternate readings. These alternate readings are by no means complete; however, they are helpful.

**Personal Comments:** If I want to get the quick and dirty on a passage that I am unfamiliar with, I generally reach for my NIV Study Bible notes first. For this reason alone, I would suggest that this would make a valuable 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Bible (meaning, if you own 3 Bibles, one of them should be the NIV Study Bible).

**Additional Features:** One of the great things about the NIV Study Bible is that it comes with a running, almost verse-by-verse commentary, which is quite important for the new believer (and which is helpful to the intermediate and mature believer as well). When it comes to reference verses, this probably has a greater number of reference verses than any other Bible which I own. And of all these Bibles, the NIV Study Bible has the best *add-on's*. The maps are good, there is a subject index as well as a concordance (both of which are fairly standard in all but the most basic of Bibles), but the charts, notes, and reference verses make the Study Bible edition a standout. The footnotes in the Study Bible are *very* good, although not always accurate (which could be said of anyone's footnotes).

Throughout Scripture, there are additional black and white maps (in addition to those found in the back of the Bible). The black and white maps deal with specific incidents. I studied Scripture for over a decade without thinking much about geography, and that was a mistake. Some Biblical figures are given very brief, thumbnail sketch as we come across them (e.g., Hannah, Samuel, Saul, David). Sometimes, a person in Scripture is introduced circuitously, and this gives us a quick and dirty bio as a reference point.

At the beginning of each book, there is some introductory material, which is also very good. For the book of 1Samuel, for instance, there are four pages of introductory material, including a chronology and a very easy to grasp outline, each taking about 3/4<sup>ths</sup> of a page.

I also have another version of the NIV called *The Narrated Bible*, which arranges Scripture chronologically, interspersing, for instance, the letters of Paul, throughout the book of Acts. As the editor/author F. LaGard Smith goes from one book to another, he often inserts a paragraph or two of explanation and historical orientation. As one would expect to find in this sort of Bible, there is also a chronological chart giving various important events and their approximate dates. I also have *The Reese Chronological Bible* (which is the KJV) and I prefer Smith's work by far. For those who desire a chronologically sweep of Biblical times, I strongly recommend *The Narrated Bible*.

**Recommendations:** There are two reasons why the NIV translation is the best-selling Bible (at least, as of this writing): It comes in many flavors (you can get a woman's version, a teen version, a chronological version, etc.) and the translation itself is very good—it strikes an excellent balance between being accurate and yet very readable. By the way—forget any of the speciality versions (unless you want a chronologically organized Bible); just get the NIV Study Bible.

**Additional Notes:**

## The New Jerusalem Bible

### Version Examined:

### Summation:

### Preface:

**Translation:** The New Jerusalem Bible

**Translators:** Primarily put together by a committee of Catholic scholars in Great Britain. This is approved for use by Roman Catholics.

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** When it came to choosing between the Hebrew or the Greek text as a preference, the NJB is an anomaly. I cannot pin down their preference. The translators used the Hebrew text instead of Greek (Judges 1:18). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. In Judges 2:3, the translator went with the Greek and the Vulgate rather than with the Hebrew. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NJB will usually go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. Although the foreword indicates that the editors relied primarily upon the Massoretic text in the Old Testament, many of the passages are rendered quite free-form, and the Greek was occasionally followed rather than the Hebrew (e.g., Judges 15:5 19:18 1Sam. 4:1 Job 15:30). Humorously enough, it reads: *Only when this presents insuperable difficulties have emendations or other versions, such as the ancient Greek translation...been used.*<sup>74</sup> The passage mentioned is hardly one with *insuperable difficulties*. Although the introduction to *The complete Parallel Bible* indicates that this is a Catholic translation (or, a translation approved for use by Catholics) and one done primarily by Catholic scholars, there is no such indication of that in its own foreword. In fact, the Latin Vulgate is not even mentioned. There is a portion of Scripture which is obviously missing from Judges 16:13–14 in the MT text. The NJB restores this from the Greek without a footnote. Generally speaking, if there is no reason to suspect a scribal error, their Old Testament translation will follow the Hebrew manuscripts rather than the Greek (e.g., Judges 18:17–18 1Chron. 1:51a). However, **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NJB follows the Greek.

Like some of the more free-form translations, the NJB often takes a few too many liberties. However, often the results are interesting, reasonably accurate and literary. Let's look at Job 15:11–12 to compare how much they take from the Greek and how much from the Hebrew and how many liberties they take. Their translation was interesting enough to list here.

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<sup>74</sup> *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. xli.

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NJB
15:11	[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?	You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	Can you ignore these divine consolations and the moderate tone of our words?
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash!	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	How passion carries you away! And how you roll your eyes, [when you vent your anger on God and speeches come tripping off your tongue!]

You will note that they did stay with the Hebrew text, more or less, where they should have, and followed the Greek appropriately as well.

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is generally rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. It is translated *languages* in I Cor. 13:1.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments as well as the **apocrypha**. What they do not have from the Apocrypha is 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees and 2 Esdras.

### Vocabulary:

### Grade Level:

**Assumptions Made:** The Greek Septuagint in many cases is more accurate than the Hebrew manuscripts that we have today, so the Greek translation is often followed instead of the Hebrew.

**Bias:** It appears as though at least some of the translators do not believe that the original text is the fully-inspired Word of God. For instance, in a footnote for 1Sam. 16, they write: *There are two separate versions of David's early association with Saul: 1 David is a court musician; 2 He is a shepherd visiting his brothers.*<sup>75</sup> The implication is that one of these versions is possibly true and the other is not. In this same footnote, they seem to indicate how these parallel accounts were interwoven—that is, the story of Saul meeting David is broken down into sets of doublets, each half of a doublet corresponding to one of the two versions.

There is nothing in either scenario which contradicts the other. David appears to have first been brought into Saul's court as a musician. However, there is no indication that he and Saul had much contact beyond an introduction (1Sam. 16). When Saul meets David again, it is when David's brothers are in a camp opposite the Philistines and Goliath is challenging Israel (1Sam. 17). At the end of 1Sam. 17, Saul inquires as to who David's father is (vv. 55–56, 57). This is not a contradiction, nor does it mean that two traditions have been handed down and that the authors of Scripture weren't sure which was the correct tradition, so they included both. Saul had met David and it is possible that he forgot who David was or just forgot who his father was. You see, Saul promised that the family of the father of the man who defeated Goliath would be exempt from taxes and from public service (1Sam. 17:25). Therefore, in order to reward the family from which David came, Saul had to know what family this was. Sure, David was mentioned by family name back in 1Sam. 16:18. This does not mean that Saul still remembers David's family name—it is even possible that Saul doesn't even recall David from the palace. The

<sup>75</sup> *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. 605 (footnote).



footnote concerning 1Sam. 16–17 indicates that the translators (or, at least some of them) do not find the Word of God to be infallible.

That being said, this does not mean that the **NJB** is a bad translation. A translation can be assembled by men who are absolute heathen and that translation can be good. One of the very best translations of the Old Testament is made by the Jewish Publication Society. Now, my guess would be that some (and possibly all) of these men are not born-again Christians. However, their translation of Holy Writ is generally very accurate and shows more literary style and flair than any other modern English translation.

The NJB reveals the influence of the charismatic groups in 1Sam. 10:10b, when Saul is prophesying among the prophets. The NJB renders this: *...and he fell into ecstasy with them*, which is a complete interpretation of this passage and not a translation.

**Description of Translation:** A freer, more literary translation. That is, it follows the rules and grammar of English as opposed to those of the Greek or Hebrew. This is one of the translations where we are told that the Levite's mistress was *angry* with him when she left him (Judges 19:2), although the Hebrew says she *committed adultery against him* and the Greek tells us that she simply *departed from him*.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized. Also, in some passages (e.g., 1Sam. 19:20), the word *spirit* is not capitalized, even though the entire phrase is *Spirit of God*. However, now and again, nouns are capitalized in the NJB that no one else capitalizes, e.g., *The members of your House who survive will come and beg him on their knees for a silver coin and a loaf of bread and say: Please give me some priestly work, so that I can have a scrap of bread to eat.* (1Sam. 2:36).

**Order of Translation:** Typical order, with the apocrypha in between the testaments.

**Strong Points:** The divine nature of Christ Jesus is clearly taught in John 1:1–14.

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:** There are many times when the meaning of the original is disguised by this version. In Gen. 1:2, we have, in the Hebrew, *the Spirit of God*; or, at the very least, *the Wind of God*. The Hebrew for *God* is the oft used *Elohim*. The NJB renders this as *a divine wind*. Although not as poor as the NAB, it is rather weak.

Now and again, the free translation of the New Jerusalem Bible says something that the original text does not. In 1Sam. 18:1, it sounds too much like Jonathan has a crush on David: *When David had finished talking to Saul, Jonathan felt an instant affection for David; Jonathan loved him like his very self;...*

Paul often puts together arguments which reveal a knowledge of Greek debating techniques. I Cor. 13:1–3 is just such an argument, which is lost in the translation of the NJB. In vv. 2–3, the grammatical structure is maintained; however, we should have seen the same grammatical structure in v. 1 (the lack of which is why many incorrectly interpret this verse).

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry and prose looks like prose.

**Section Headings:** I had no section headings in my version (*The Complete Parallel Bible*). I don't know if there is an addition where they have section headings.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Once and awhile, I come across a translation completely out of left field, e.g.:

Passage	NJB	NASB	Young's <i>Literal Translation</i>
Job 19:26	After my awakening, he will set me close to him, and from my flesh I shall look on God.	"Even after my skin is destroyed [lit., <i>which they have cut off</i> ], Yet from my flesh I shall see God;	And after my skin hath compassed this <i>body</i> , Then from my flesh I see God:

In all fairness to the **NJB**, this is a difficult verse to exegete (see my exegesis of Job 19:26).

**Additional Features:** The version which I own is a part of *The Complete Parallel Bible*, so there are no real additional features which are a part of this translations. There is a very occasional footnote with some moderately important information.

### Recommendations:

**Additional Notes:** The NJB contains only one versions of Esther: the longer, Greek version, with the additions generally thought to be apocryphal. The NJB also contains apocryphal material that has been added to the book of Daniel (Dan. 3:24–90, 14, 14). The NJB follows the chapter and verse arrangement of the Hebrew rather than that of the KJV.

Some time ago, I picked up a copy of *The Complete Parallel Bible*, thinking to myself, "The NRSV, REB, NAB and NJB—that is an unusual grouping of translations." I no longer think that. Even though two of these are officially Catholic Bibles (i.e., they are accepted by the Catholic Church—the latter two) and two of them are protestant Bibles, they actually have a great deal in common. When the Septuagint offers an alternate reading, all four lean toward the Septuagint's reading. They all are influenced by **charismatics**/mystics. Also, all of them translate several books of the Apocrypha (the Protestant REB and the NRSV actually translate more books than the other two).

## The New King James Version

**Version examined:** Thomas Nelson Publishers, Wide Margin Reference Edition (with center-column references, translation notes, significant textual variants, concordance, and maps).

**Summation:**

This is one of the most accurate and readable translations available; however, because it is called the *New King James Version*, those who would shy away from the KJV make the mistake of not selecting this as their primary Bible. This is an excellent translation, and one that is, may I repeat, very readable. There are some instances where this translation (or, if you will, revision) lacks the literary power and thunder of the KJV (which can be said of pretty much every modern translation).

**Translation:** The New King James Version.

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:** Their intent was to maintain the power and literalness of the original KJV, yet update it for modern use. Scofield did a marvelous job of this in 1909. He replaced a relatively small number of archaic words with their modern equivalents, retained the strength and power of the KJV, and yet provided us with a more readable version of same. Now, Scofield did not change the Shakespearian style of the KJV; he simply updated a few word which made little sense to the modern reader. The translators of the NKJV also update the Old English style.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Since this is really a reworking of the KJV, the NKJV generally followed the Hebrew Massoretic text instead of Greek (Judges 1:18 2:3 18:17–18 19:18 1Chron. 1:51a Job 15:30). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NKJV will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. Like the **NASB** and the **KJV**, in Judges 15:5, the **NKJV** took the middle ground of following the Septuagint, but italicizing that which was not found in the Hebrew. Like the **KJV**, the missing text from Judges 16:13–14, which could be found in the LXX, is neither restored or mentioned by footnote. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the **NKJV** follows the Hebrew, but footnotes the Greek (which the **KJV** did not).

I thought it might be interesting to place the **KJV** and the **NKJV** side-by-side, along with the Hebrew and the Greek. If you have read the preface, you realize that it is probably the most reasonable to take vv. 11–12a from the Hebrew, and v. 12b from the Greek.

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint
15:11	[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?	You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash!	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?

Job	KJV	NKJV
15:11	Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?	Are the consolations of God too small for you, And the word <i>spoken</i> gently [or, A secret <i>thing</i> ] with you?
15:12	Why doth thine heart carry thee away? And what do thine eyes wink at,... <sup>76</sup>	Why does your heart carry you away, And what do your eyes wink at,...

You will note, when comparing these, several important factors. The **NKJV** gives the alternate Hebrew renderings and certainly is much easier to follow. I suspect those who rally under the “KJV only” flag will die out over the next 20–30 years, as they seem to make up a small, but occasionally vocal minority in Christendom today.

On the other hand, the **NKJV** does not ignore the other manuscripts nearly as much as the **KJV** did. In 1Sam. 5:4, the **NKJV** follows the **Septuagint**, Vulgate, Aramaic Targum and the ancient Syriac translation, and footnotes that the Massoretic text is slightly different. There are many more occasions where the translators of the **NKJV** give us a peek into the alternate readings, whereas such notes are not traditionally found in the **KJV**.

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. The **NKJV** does not add the word *unknown* to the translation, as it does not help the understanding nor does it smooth out the English.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments. I suspect that the Apocrypha was translated as well, although none of my versions have the Apocrypha included.

### Vocabulary:

### Grade Level:

### Assumptions Made:

**Bias:** Like the **KJV**, the **NASB** and several others, the bias reflected in the **NKJV** is that which the original authors intended. We see no concessions made to the **charismatics**. In I Cor. 14, the italicized *unknown* (of *unknown tongues*, as we find in the **KJV**), has been excised. 1Sam. 10:10b reads just as it should, and there is no indication that Saul fell into some prophetic trance.

**Description of Translation:** There are some really goofy believers who sincerely believe that there is one and only one real translation of the Bible and that is the **KJV**. For those people, (1) not only should they get over it, but, (2) this is a marvelous reworking of the **KJV**. It takes what Scofield did with the **KJV** several steps further and for those who must have a King James Bible, this would be the one to have.<sup>77</sup>

One thing which is important to grasp—the translators simply did not change the *thee*’s and *thou*’s into *you*’s. They did not update a few words as did Scofield. There were places where they reworked the translation so that it remained faithful to the original, yet was updated on the basis of (1) modern English; (2) improved manuscripts; or, (3) improved understanding of the original. Let me give you some examples:

<sup>76</sup> The **KJV** does not necessarily break this up into separate, poetic lines as I have; the **NKJV** does, however.

<sup>77</sup> I realize that I will not change any minds here. I speak as if I am in an ideal world at times. One who owns and uses a **KJV** should also purchase a **NKJV**, particularly when making points and quoting verses.

Passage	KJV	NKJV
Job 20:17	He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.	He will not see the streams, The rivers flowing with honey and cream.
Job 21:32	Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.	Yet he shall be brought to the grave, And a vigil kept over the tomb.
Psalms 44:12	Thou sellist thy people for nought, and dost not increase <i>thy wealth</i> by their price.	You sell Your people for <i>next to nothing</i> , and are not enriched by selling them.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to *God* are capitalized. The translators are much more consistent in this regard than found in the KJV.

**Order of Translation:** Standard English order.

**Strong Points:** This Bible gives us the literary power of the old **KJV**, which many believers were raised on (primarily those of past generations), but updates it enough to where a new believer can feel comfortable reading it. Another strong point in its favor is that the **KJV** translators did their level best to give a literal, almost word-for-word, translation from the original languages, no matter how tough such a task was. Even some of the best translations pupped out where the **KJV** and the **NKJV** came through (I have give the example of Judges 21:22 under the NASB).

**Weak Points:** The **NKJV** is not consistent in its translation of Bethel (*House of God*). See comments concerning consistency under **Weak Points** in the **KJV**. However, in its defense, it properly footnotes these instances (e.g., Judges 21:2) whereas, the **KJV** does not.

Now and again, a rendering in the **NKJV** can be confusing. The Ark of God remained in Kiriath-Jearim for 60–100 years; however, it sounds like only 20 in the **NKJV**: *So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.* However, the **NKJV** is not inaccurate here in its rendering. Part of the problem is the chapter division in the Hebrew (which was added a long time after Scripture was written).

**Criticisms:** Like the **KJV** and the **NASB**, the **NKJV** seems to be married to the verse separation imposed on Scripture early on. The separation of the Bible into chapters and verses is sometimes a very convenient, albeit misused, convention. However, there are many places where this does not work. In 1Chron. 5:1–2, for instance, we have the continuation of a thought which should not be broken up. The chronicler is explaining why Reuben does not have the rights and privileges of the firstborn. This fell first to Joseph. However, *he* is also not accorded the position of firstborn, and the chronicler explains why in v. 2. The *he* at the end of v. 1 refers to Joseph, not to Reuben; however, this is confusing and easy to miss because of the verse separation. V. 1a properly should be a title for this chapter. V. 1b–2 are parenthetical and should be in smaller italicized type below the title or in parentheses below the title. Completely separating these verses, as does the **KJV** and the **NASB**, is a mistake.<sup>78</sup> That being said, there is not a single contemporary version that I am aware of (including the **CEV**, the **NLT** and the **TEV**) which take advantage of the organization of this chapter and properly reflect this as a chapter heading rather than as the beginning of a sentence.

### Their Comments:

**Layout:** Each verse *begins* a new paragraph, as in the **KJV** (something which I never cared much for). The actual paragraphs (which are more like sections) begin with an emboldened verse number. For instance, 1Sam. 16:11, which has 3 different quotations, which, in the English, are properly separated into 3 paragraphs, is written as one

<sup>78</sup> This may be in only my version of the **NKJV**.

paragraph. In the same chapter, with a myriad of quotes, there are only 3 sections. Since the verse separation and chapter separation occurred long after the original manuscripts, there is nothing sacred about them; therefore, formatting this as though these separations are meaningful is the biggest weakness of this and the **NASB**.

In general, the poetry is centered; the prose is full-justified. Old Testament passages quoted in the New are set apart, centered and italicized. Margin notes are in the center and listed first under the individual verse, and then by its footnote *letter*.

**Section Headings:** The section headings are integrated into the text, centered, italicized and with larger print (at least in my version of the **NKJV**).

**Footnotes:** There are no footnotes, per se, in the **NKJV** but there are Scriptural references and short remarks about alternate readings. The problem is that it is not completely clear which reading is which. For instance, Psalm 106:3b reads: *And he who does righteousness at all times!* The margin note is “LXX, Syr., Tg., Vg. *those who do.*” I would have preferred “So reads MT. LXX, Syr., Tg., Vg. *those who do.*” Or, “Alt. reading: *those who do* (LXX, Syr., Tg., Vg.)” Or, even, “LXX, Syr., Tg., Vg.: *those who do.*” On the other hand, their notations and the like are explained quite clearly in the section entitled *How to Use This Reference Bible*.

**Personal Comments:** My biggest problem with the **NASB** is the *Thee’s* and the *Thou’s* used when referring to God. This is done out of respect, obviously, but there is not difference in the original Hebrew (or Greek). Therefore, the updated *You* is the most reasonable rendering of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular or plural. The **NKJV** is cognizant of this, and this is one area of superiority of the **NKJV** over the **NASB**.

One of my original prejudices in beginning this comparison was that the **NASB** was superior to pretty much every other translation when it comes to both adhering to the original language, yet making good English sense. However, as I exegete more and more verses of Scripture, I am forced to the conclusion that the **NKJV** is every bit the equal of the **NASB**, if not superior to the **NASB**.

Passage	NASB	NKJV
Psalm 44:12	Thou dost sell Thy people cheaply, And hast not profited by their sale.	You sell Your people for <i>next to nothing</i> , and are not enriched by selling them.
Psalm 44:25	For our soul has sunk down into the dust; Our body cleaves to the earth.	For our soul is bowed down to the dust [or, <i>ground</i> in humiliation]; Our body clings to the ground.
Generally speaking, the <b>NKJV</b> is more modern in its rendering than the <b>NASB</b> (which has since been revised as well), yet is just as literal in its rendering.		

**Additional Comments:** You note that this is called the *New King James Version*. So, what makes it new? There are several changes. First of all, the vocabulary was updated considerably. Secondly, and less apparent, is that the order of the original Hebrew and Greek in the **KJV** was often preserved, resulting in, at times, a difficult and ponderous translation which needed the additional of several words in order for the translation to make sense. What we find in the **NKJV** is that the order of the original language was occasionally compromised so that better sense of the verse could be made in the English without the addition of several words. Some examples of this:

Literal from the Hebrew	KJV	NKJV
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**Job 20:18**

Returning gain and he does not swallow down like [or, *in*] wealth of his compensation, and he will not enjoy.

That which he labored for shall he restore, and shall not swallow *it* down; according to *his* substance *shall* the restitution *be*, and he shall not rejoice *in it*.

He will restore that for which he labored, And will not swallow *it* down; From the proceeds of business He will get no enjoyment.

As you no doubt notice, the **NKJV** flows better and is put in the form of poetry, which is apropos.

**Additional Features:** One of the best keys to understanding the notations found in the NKJV is found at the beginning of my Bible, immediately following the preface, in a section called **How to Use This Reference Bible**. Because of the superior graphics which may be employed in today's books, actual columns from the NKJV are shown with explanations off to the side as to how the various reference notes are to be understood. What is especially good is that next to the explanation is a line pointing to what is being explained, which is circled (actually, there are two circles; the Scripture and the note are both circled). At a glance, I have a full understanding of their reference notes and the abbreviations used (the key to the actual abbreviations follows, which is a short, one page list). Whenever a reference note confused me, or needed some clarification, these few pages made it easy for me to find the sort of note that I had a question about, and understand more fully what their shorthand was telling me.

**Recommendations:** This is an outstanding translation, one which I develop a greater appreciation for each day. It is as though the translators recognized that the **KJV** was probably the greatest English translation ever produced and they sat down and tried to determine was there any way at all that it could be improved upon. The **NKJV** is a worthy successor to the old **KJV**, and it is a version of Scripture that everyone should own.

**Additional Notes:** The margin notes in my **NKJV** (Thomas Nelson publishers) are almost exactly the same as those in my Scofield **KJV**. There are some important differences, however. The **NKJV** tells us more about what manuscripts say what.

## The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** This is a special edition Bible which features two unknown translations by Farstad, Hodges, Moss, Picirilli and Pickering and it is published by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

**Translators:** Arthur Farstad, Zane Hodges, C. Michael Moss, Robert Picirilli and Wilbur Pickering.

**Date of Translation:** ©1994.

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** In I Cor. 14, glôssais (γλῶσσαις) is rendered *tongues*, which I don't personally have a problem with, because the instrument of speech is what is being emphasized when that word is used. That we are speaking of foreign languages is clear by their translation of vv. 11 and 21.

**Portion Translated:** The New Testament only.

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:** Traditional KJV.

**Strong Points:** For studying the New Testament in depth, this is the version of the NKJV that you want.

**Weak Points:** This lacks the morphology of the Greek words and Strong's numbers.

**Criticisms:** What would have made this the perfect reference work would be the morphology of each word and the Strong's reference number located above the Greek. I would buy a second copy if that was included.

**Their Comments:**



**Layout:** There are three texts one on top of another. The top is the Greek text, the next is the most literal word-for-word text, and the third line (which actually gives a more idiomatic rendering of one or two words) is a slightly less literal translation. Off on outside column is the NKJV.

**Section Headings:** The section headings are left-justified, in larger and darker print.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** For those with any weaknesses in Greek, a full morphology of each an every word along with Strong's reference numbers would have made this the perfect New Testament reference book.

**Additional Features:** On almost every page, there is a note about a particular Greek word, with a little background of that word. In the back of the text, there is an index (actually two of them) which reference these notes both from the English and the Greek. In addition to this, where there are textual problems or differences, these are referenced as footnotes.

**Recommendations:** I strongly recommend this Bible version for those with a strong interest in the New Testament.

**Additional Notes:**

## The New Living Translation

**Version examined:** The Open Bible

**Summation:** Somewhat over-simplified and occasionally inaccurate, yet very easy to read and understand. Their motto *the instant that you read this, you understand it* is accurate. Some passages are remarkably well-translated, being both accurate and good literature.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The New Living Translation. The version which I own is called *The Open Bible*, which has a plethora of additional features which help to recommend it. The original Living Bible translation was a *thought-for-thought* translation, or a paraphrase. Moser reams Dr. Taylor, the original author of *The Living Bible* for paraphrasing the Bible. *Does Dr. Taylor believe that he can improve on the words that the Holy Spirit selected? If he can better select the words to be used, is that a weakness on the part of the Holy Spirit in not selecting the best words, the words Dr. Taylor selected? Dr. Taylor also said, "It is a restatement of an author's thoughts, using different words than he did." Just how does Dr. Taylor know the "author's thoughts"? Did he have some kind of special revelation? And does Dr. Taylor believe that he is better equipped to select the words to express the "author's thoughts" than the Author Himself?*<sup>79</sup> The more I examined Moser's diatribe against the Living Bible, and compared it to what I found in the New Living Translation, the more I became nonplused. When examining the notes and additions made to the NLT, I became more and more convinced that these are very different and separate translations. However, when examining specific translations of specific verses, the NLT appears simply to be an update of TLB. If anyone reading this knows the connection between the two translations, I would like to be enlightened.

**Translators:** Although most translations are either the work of one man or a large group effort; the NLT identifies those who worked on which books. Obviously, this means that there would be times when the translation would be less than consistent, but we could expect that whenever a large group translated the Bible by section or book. Apparently, the author first associated with the translation of *The Living Bible* was Dr. Kenneth Taylor. I honestly do not know if these translations are related to one another. TLB was the product of one man's work and this appears to be the work of many. TLB is not mentioned in the preface as the precursor of this translation. There are some striking differences between TLB and the NLT—in TLB, in between pages 77 and 78, on an unnumbered page, we have the quote *Be a Rebel with a Cause*: on this page, Jesus was called *the greatest Activist who ever lived*.<sup>80</sup> There is nothing like that whatsoever in the NLT, which indicates to me that these translations may have had similar purposes, but are not related. The NLT appears to be very orthodox in its notes and helps.

**Date of Translation:** 1996.

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** They used the version of the Massoretic text known as *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977). Some deference was given to the early translations of the Hebrew into Greek, Latin, Samaritan and Syriac. They tend to follow the MT most of the time (e.g., 1Chron. 1:51a), although in the case of 1Chron. 1:51, they do what most translations do, separating this verse in two.

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<sup>79</sup> M.L. Moser, Jr.; *A Critique of the Living Bible*; The Challenge Press, Little Rock, AR; ©1973, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> M.L. Moser, Jr.; *A Critique of the Living Bible*; The Challenge Press, Little Rock, AR; ©1973, p. 16.

In 1947, a number of manuscripts were discovered in a cave in Qumran, which was near the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, which manuscripts became known as the **Dead Sea Scrolls**. The NLT makes use of these manuscripts and notes where their translation was followed. For instance, where the phrase *three-year-old bull* was used rather than *three bulls* (1Sam. 1:22), the note in the NLT reads: *As in Dead Sea Scrolls, Greek and Syriac versions. Masoretic Text reads '3 bulls.'* This footnote is much preferred over *according to some manuscripts; others read "thus and so."* The NLT makes use of these other manuscripts, along with the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta and the Latin Vulgate, and properly footnotes them when they are employed. Unfortunately, the NLT is not consistent here. For instance, it footnotes a change in 1Sam. 1:24 from *three bulls* to a *three-year-old bull*, noting this is so found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Greek and the Syriac. However, their subject of the first line of that verse is *Hannah*; this is not in accordance with the Hebrew (which simply has *she*); the CEV, on the other hand, has the subject *Hannah and Elkanah*, and notes that this in accordance with the DSS and one ancient manuscript. My point is that the NLT is not going to consistently follow the DSS's, nor will it always footnote a change from the Hebrew. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NLT follows the Greek, and footnotes the differences.

Now and again, the translating of various portions of Scripture gets a little out there. Consider Job 15:11–12:

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NLT
15:11	"[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?"	"You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	"Is God's comfort too little for you? Is his gentle word not enough?"
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash,	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	What has captured your reason? What has weakened your vision,
15:13	that you turn around unto God your spirit and you cause to go out from your mouth [such] words."	That you have vented rage before the Lord and you have delivered such words from [your] mouth"	that you turn against God and say all these evil things?"
15:30	He will not turn aside from darkness; his shoot will dry up—a flame; and will depart in a wind his mouth.	Neither will he in any way escape the darkness; let the wind blast his blossom, and let his flower fall off.	"They will not escape the darkness. The flame will burn them up, and the breath of God will destroy everything they have."
16:13b	"He pours out to the earth my gall."	"They poured my gall upon the ground."	"The ground is wet with my blood."

Let me give you some additional examples:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NLT
1Sam. 14:19b	And so said Saul to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."	...and Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hands."	So Saul said to Ahijah, "Never mind; let's get going!"
Certainly, the NLT is easier to understand; the problem in this example is that it bears little resemblance to the original text.			

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:** They used the *Greek New Testament* (4<sup>th</sup> revised edition, 1993) published by the United Bible Societies, as well as the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (27<sup>th</sup> edition, 1993). These two editions apparently have the same text, but differ in punctuation and notes.

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is generally rendered *language(s)* in I Cor. 12–14 and then *tongues* when referring to the physical part of the body. It is footnoted as meaning *tongues* in I Corinthians.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Some of the language might be spoken out in the street. This is a very readable translation, and their advertisement, “You will understand this Bible the very moment that you read it” (or words to that effect), is an accurate statement. I find it to be more literate and more accurate than TEV (although they are very similar to one another)—it is also at a higher reading level.

**Grade Level:** They claim that this is appropriate to a Junior level high school student; I would place it at the Freshman or Sophomore level (however, the reading level of these kids is deteriorating).

**Assumptions Made:** One of the assumptions made by the translators is that this would be a Bible studied by the masses, and not only is this Bible (again, I have *the Open Bible*) filled with study helps, but the translation itself is designed more with the average believer in mind.

**Bias:** I must admit that I was expecting a bias toward the charismatic crowd, as several charismatic believers that I know use this Bible. However, that is not the case. Although we do have glôssa rendered *tongues* rather than *dialects*, the gist of the passage is not a support of the charismatic doctrine. Some of Paul’s logic is lost, however, in their rendering of I Cor. 13:1–3; but, given that no one has ever properly explained that passage when it is correctly translated (at least, to the best of my knowledge), I cannot fault them. Once key passage is 1Sam. 10:10b. The Open Bible renders this correctly as: *...he, too, began to prophesy*. Saul is not said to fall into some sort of an ecstatic state of mind.

**Description of Translation:** A very readable, thought-for-thought rendering from the original into the English. Although it is more of an interpretation than a translation, next to the CEV, this is a literal word-for-word translation. In other words, this is far from being literal, but the CEV is even farther away from the original.

Let me give you some examples of what the NLT has done:

	From the Literal Hebrew	From the Greek Septuagint	NLT
Judges 2:10	And also all the generation the that were gathered unto their [lit., his] fathers and so arises a generation another after them who did not know Y <sup>e</sup> howah and also the work which He had done for Israel.	And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.	After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things that he had done for Israel.
	<b>Comment:</b> The NLT says that this new generation grows up and that they do not remember the great things which God has done, nor do they acknowledge Him. There are two problems: they do not <i>know</i> the LORD, meaning they are unbelievers; and they do not know of His might works (the NLT implies that they knew about these works at one time, and forgot them).		

	From the Literal Hebrew	From the Greek Septuagint	NLT
1Sam. 1:21	And so went up the man Elkanah and all his house to slaughter to Y <sup>ehowah</sup> a sacrifice of the days and his vow.	And the man Helkana and all his house went up to offer in Selom the yearly sacrifice, and his vows, and all the tithes of his land.	The next year Elkanah, Peninnah, and their children went on their annual trip to offer a sacrifice to the LORD.
	<b>Comment:</b> Obviously, the NLT tells who is in the house of Elkanah, which is not found in the Greek or the Hebrew. Nothing is said of the vow found in the Hebrew or the tithes, which is found in the Greek. Nothing is radically wrong here; it is simply not a translation inasmuch as words which were not there were added and words which were there were dropped out.		
1Sam. 2:30b	'A promise I promised your house and the house of your father: "They will walk in and out before Me forever." ' Thus, [this] declaration of Y <sup>ehowah</sup> : '[Eli's sons are] a profanity to Me, for those honoring Me, I will honor and those despising Me, I will despise.'	"Your house and the house of your father will pass before Me forever, but now the Lord says, That be far from Me; for I will only honor them that honor Me, and he that sets Me at nought will be despised."	"The terrible things you are doing cannot continue! I had promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would always be my priests. But I will honor only those who honor me, and I will despise those who despise me."
	<b>Comment:</b> This is an extremely difficult passage to translate and to interpret. In the context of this chapter, it is clear that <i>the house of your father</i> is not a reference to Eli's literal father, but to the house of Aaron, which included Moses (it was him to whom this promise was made originally). Whereas, this is moderately clear in most literal renderings, this is not clear in the NLT. Those who would continue to walk before God as priests forever are those from the seed of Aaron (which is gotten from careful exegesis of the passage)—not, as the NLT reads: <i>your branch of the tribe of Levi</i> . In the NLT, it sounds as though God made this promise to Eli and to Eli's father, and that this promise was all about his branch of the Levi (which is open to interpretation, I guess). In any case, my point is, despite the fact, that the NLT makes this verse much easier to understand, it also is much easier to misunderstand. In the NLT, it sounds like God made this promise forever, but then, Eli's sons were such turds that God had to change His mind about that promise. This is not the proper understanding of that passage.		
1Sam. 13:16	Saul, Jonathan his son, and the people, the ones present with them, are staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines have encamped in Mishmash.	And Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were found with them, halted in Gabaa of Benjamin; and they wept; and the Philistines had encamped in Machmas.	Saul and Jonathan and the troops with them were staying at Geba, near Gibeah, in the land of Benjamin. The Philistines set up their camp at Michmash.
	Note that even those most exegetes believe Geba and Gibeah to be different names for the same city, the NLT inserts <i>near Gibeah</i> in this verse (without any manuscript precedent that I am aware of), and therefore leads the reader to believe that these are two different cities.		
Psalms 10:4	Corrupt, as a height of his nostril, does not seek; [there is] no God [in] all his schemes.	The sinner has provoked the Lord, according to the abundance of his anger, he will not seek after Him; the God is not before him.	These wicked people are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.

	From the Literal Hebrew	From the Greek Septuagint	NLT
	<b>Comment:</b> Although the NLT has put a possibly reasonable spin on the second line of this verse, one must recognize that it is completely interpretive and that it is not exactly a translation (for instance; there is no Hebrew or Greek word for <i>dead</i> in the Massoretic text or in the Septuagint).		
Psalm 10:6	He says in his heart, "I will not be moved to generation and generation, which [is] not in adversity."	For he has said in his heart, "I will not be moved, [continuing] without evil from generation to generation."	They say to themselves, "Nothing bad will ever happen to us! We will be free of trouble forever!"
Psalm 44:2	You, [by] Your hand, You have caused to dispossess the Gentiles; then You planted them [Israel]. You caused evil [to befall Gentile] peoples; then you sent them [the Israelites] forth.	Your hand completely destroyed the heathen and You planted them; You afflicted the nations, and You cast them out.	You drove out the pagan nations and gave all the land to our ancestors; you crushed their enemies, setting our ancestors free.
Psalm 44:24	Why do You hide Your face? [Why] do You forget our humiliation and our distress?	Why do You turn Your face away and forget our poverty and our affliction?	Why do you look the other way? Why do you ignore our suffering and oppression?

You will note, while not altogether a literal word-for-word rendering, the NLT often gives us a very reasonable and very readable thought-for-thought translation. On the other hand, there are times when one can read the NLT and get the wrong impression.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Typical KJV ordering.

**Strong Points:** There appears to be a focus upon the new believer in *the Open Bible*, as not only are verses cited, but page numbers as well (a new believer is not going to know where to find the book of Jonah or 2Chronicles without first going to the index—giving them a page number eliminates that extra step). *A Christian's Guide to the New Life* at the beginning of the Bible is well-laid out, with major points done in boldface to make them stand out. If I was going to give a new believer a Bible or an unbeliever a Bible, this might be the version that I would choose. *The Open Bible* had some of the most readable print of all the Bibles which I looked at.

The NLT, although it suffers from a weak and nonliteral translation at times, is a very good work of literature—more than most modern translations. One of the marvelous aspects of the KJV is that its phrasing was powerful and dynamic (obviously, much of this had to do with being the Word of God). However, it was so, not at the expense of a literal translation, but revealed great scholarship both from the point of view of the original languages and the grand Old English that it was translated into. Although I certainly hesitate at placing the NLT is a class with the KJV, from a literary standpoint, it is quite good and well-phrased, and very easy to understand. Allow me to quote an example from Job 18:15: **The home of the wicked will disappear beneath a fiery barrage of burning sulfur.** That is both accurate and literally sound.

Also, there are times when a word-for-word translation just does not cut it. It is difficult to wade through and to understand. There are times when the NLT both translates and interprets a verse in such a way that its meaning is more clearly understood (and understood correctly) than the translation in Young's or in the NASB. Some examples follow:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	NLT
1Sam. 1:23	And so said to her Elkanah her man, "Do the good in your [two] eyes. Remain until your weaning of him, only may establish Y <sup>e</sup> howah His [or, <i>your</i> ] word." And so remained the woman and so she nursed her son until her weaning of him.	And Helkana her husband said to her, "Do that which is good in your eyes, abide still until you have weaned him; but may the Lord establish that which comes out of your mouth." And the woman tarried and nursed her son until she had weaned him.	"Whatever you think is best," Elkanah agreed. "Stay here for now, and may the LORD help you keep your promise." So she stayed home and nursed the baby.
1Sam. 1:26	And so she said, "Please, my lord, living of your soul, my lord; I [am] the woman the standing one with you in here to pray unto Y <sup>e</sup> howah."	And she said, "I pray, my lord, as your soul lives, I <i>am</i> the woman that stood in your presence with you while praying to the Lord."	"Sir, do you remember me?" Hannah asked. "I am the woman who stood here several years ago praying to the LORD."
Psalm 10:8	He sits in ambush in villages; in hiding, he murders an innocent [one]. His eyes for a hapless [one] they lurk;	He lies in wait with rich [men] in secret places in order to kill the innocent. His eyes are set against the poor.	They lurk in dark alleys, murdering the innocent who pass by. They are always searching for some helpless victim.
Psalm 10:11	He thinks in his heart, "God has forgotten [me]; He has hidden His face [from me]; He will not see [this] ever."	For he has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He has turned away His face so as never to look."	The wicked say to themselves, "God isn't watching! He will never notice!"
Psalm 10:14	You have seen for You, misery [from exhaustion] and taunting provocation, You do carefully examine to take in Your hands; upon You he forsakes [the] hapless; [to the] fatherless, You [even] You have been a helper.	You see; You [even] You contemplate suffering and anger to deliver them over into Your hands. To You is left the poor; You were a helper of orphan.	But you do see the trouble and grief they cause. You take note of it an punish them. The helpless put their trust in you. You are the defender of orphans.

One of the most difficult psalms to translate is Psalm 10. However, one would never know that to read it in the NLT. In the NLT, it is as clear as can be. Since there are no notes on the translation itself, the reader does not realize the liberties which the NLT has taken with this passage. However, on the other hand, if you need something which is easy to understand and somewhat close to the meaning of the original, the NLT is a good option.

There are times when I find the translation of the New Living Testament to be sublime. Some examples are below:

	KJV	NASB	NLT
Psalm 103:16	For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.	When there wind has passed over it, it is not more; And its place acknowledges it no longer.	The wind blows, and we are gone— as though we had never been here.

I also found the NLT to be better in several instances than other *thought-for-thought* translations (for instance, the CEV). I have an example below. The NLT has an authoritative ring to it, and the CEV seems sort of childish by comparison.

Two <i>Thought-for-Thought</i> Translations of Psalm 73:21–26	
NLT	CEV
Then I realized how bitter I had become, how pained I had been by all I had seen. I was so foolish and ignorant— I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you are holding my right hand. You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.	Once I was bitter and brokenhearted. I was stupid and ignorant, and I treated you as a wild animal would. But I never really left you, and you hold my right hand. Your advice has been my guide, and later you will welcome me in glory. In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I want. My body and mind may fail, but you are my strength and my choice forever.

There are times when their translation serves to explain a passage. In 1Sam. 18:13, the **NLT** tells us that David was put in charge of *only* 1000 men. That word *only* does not occur in the original; however, it does help to explain this chapter, which, when examined closely, is problematic. David is in charge of what appears to be a much larger army in 1Sam. 18:5; he is proclaimed as a killer of tens of thousands of enemies, which is reasonable for someone who oversees most of the army. So 1Sam. 18:13 appears to be a demotion, although that can only be logically inferred. The **NLT** is the only translation which I am aware of that indicates that this is a demotion.

**Weak Points:** Because this is a *thought-for-thought* translation, there was some loss of understanding. For instance, there is a logical progression in each of the first three verses of I Corinthians 13, which is only realized in the third verse. That is, Paul states a supposition and then ups the ante; however, the NLT does not properly present this except in the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse.

I gave the example of Judges 2:10, where a generation comes along which does not acknowledge God nor remember His mighty works; however, the Hebrew does not say this. It tells us that they do not know God (meaning that they are a generation of unbelievers) and that they don't know of His mighty works; the NLT implies that they knew about God's mighty works on behalf of Israel, but then just forgot them.

A second example: in 1Sam. 7:2, we read: **The Ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for a long time—twenty years in all. During that time, all Israel mourned because it seemed that the LORD had abandoned them.** Here is the problem: the Ark did not stay in Kiriath-jearim for 20 years. The Ark was taken to Kiriath-jearim about partway through the ministry of Samuel (say 20–50 years remained); we then have the 40 year reign of Saul; and then we have a couple of years of David's reign. And then David fetches the Ark from this place (2Sam. 6:3–4). The latter three-fourths of the first book of Samuel covers a period of 70 years, roughly. Taking the NLT at its face here would



compress those 70 years into about 17 years—that would be a problem with interpretation. Therefore, when dealing with any *thought-for-thought* translation, do not base any dogmatically held doctrines upon what some passages say—you may be forced to eat crow when faced with a corrected translation (or, even worse, you refuse to be moved from your false position).

Another very serious problem is that this translation is *dumbed-down*. When David prays to God to keep him from committing acts of pride and arrogance, the NLT renders this: **Keep me from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin** (Psalm 19:13). In fact, one could meditate on this verse and somehow think that sinless perfection might be possible for the believer in this life. Whereas I don't mind dropping the vocabulary a notch to reach the masses, when you completely change the meaning of a verse, you take from their understanding of God's Word. I have actually heard advertisements for this Bible, saying *The minute you read a passage, you understand it* (or words to that effect). There is no indication anywhere that we are to be able to pick up the Bible, open it to some miscellaneous passage, read and then immediately understand it. In fact, if anything, there is indication that the Bible requires a great deal of studying (which the pastor-teacher is to be an aide in, not a cheerleader for). Furthermore, it is not a good thing to be able to pick up the Bible, read it, and immediately understand it, *if* what it is that you understand is not what is really written in the original Greek or Hebrew.

As mentioned, although the NLT will depend upon the Dead Sea Scrolls, they make some changes in the text on their own and what is found in the Hebrew or in the Dead Sea Scrolls is not referred to (the subject of 1Sam. 1:24 is an illustration of that). In other words, they do not consistently use the Dead Sea Scrolls and they make many changes in the Scripture without footnoting them. The CEV seems to be better about footnoting changes (however, the CEV is also a very *free* translation, so it does not always indicate a change has been made either).

**Criticisms:** M.L. Moser, Jr. comments on the original *Living Bible: The translators that translated TLB into "popular language, very readable and easily understand," we find lacked the one over-all quality of one who is to translate the Bible, and that is a recognition that the Bible is God's Holy inspired Word and that it is different from any other book in the world and should therefore be handled differently from any other book in the world.*<sup>81</sup>

There are some specific passages cited by Moser, e.g., I Tim. 3:16, which reads, in the Scofield KJV: **And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory.** The key phrase, which I *bolded* is, in the NLT *Christ appeared in the flesh*. Obviously, it appears as though the NLT is stepping back from the deity of Christ in this passage. However, the NLT properly footnotes this, saying that *Christ* is actually *Who* in the Greek; and, in some manuscripts, we have *God* (it is actually the later manuscripts which read *God* in this passage). So, whereas the deity of our Lord is not strongly emphasized by the NLT in this passage, it is possible that was a later addition to the Greek anyway. Whereas the Living Bible perhaps backpedaled somewhat with regards to Paul's castigation of long hair on a man (I Cor. 11:14–15);<sup>82</sup> the NLT does no such thing; it reads: **Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair?** (I Cor. 11:14).

One of the major problems when giving a paraphrase of Scripture is that the *thought-for-thought* rendering is not always an actual *thought-for-thought* rendering. One example is 1Sam. 2:30–31, which reads, in the NLT: **"Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The terrible things you are doing cannot continue! I had promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would always be my priests. But I will honor only those who honor me, and I will despise those who despise me. I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priests. All the members of your family will die before their time. None will live to a ripe old age."** What it sounds like is that God had made a promise to that particular branch of Levi—i.e., the line of Aaron through Ithamar; and that God

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<sup>81</sup> M.L. Moser, Jr.; *A Critique of the Living Bible*; The Challenge Press, Little Rock, AR; ©1973, pp. 7–8

<sup>82</sup> The translation from the Living Bible: *...a man with long hair tends to be ashamed.*

was now reneging on that promise. This is not the case, however. God is not reneging on any promise. It is simply the translation which makes it seem that way.<sup>83</sup>

Now, there are a several times where the intent to present certain verses in a way that was easy to understand, still weakened some orthodox doctrines, e.g., the inspiration of the very words of Scripture. Psalm 119:210 should read: *Your Word is pure; therefore, Your servant loves it.* The NLT translation reads, instead: *Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much.*<sup>84</sup> The first word in question here is *ʾimʾrâh* (אִמְרָה) [pronounced *imʳ-RAW*], which means, *utterance, speech, word*. It is often used in the phrase *the Word of God* or *the Word of Jehovah* (2Sam. 22: 31 Psalm 12:6 18:30 10:19 Prov. 30:5 Isa. 5:24). Whereas, translating this as *promise* is almost legitimate (*command* would be equally reasonable), the most accurate translation is *word*. Strong’s #561, #565 BDB #57. The attendant verb is the Qal passive participle of the Hebrew word *tsâraph* (צָרַף) [pronounced *tzaw-RAHF*], which means *to test* [the purity and the genuineness of a metal]. The outcome of a successful test is *purity*. Both translations in this regard are acceptable. Strong’s #6884 BDB #864. In *dumbing down* the translation, the fact that the Bible teaches its very words are inspired is herein compromised. We have a similar contrast in Isa. 1:10a, where *Hear the Word of Jehovah, you rulers of Sodom*; becomes simply, *“Listen to the LORD, you leaders of Israel!”* in the NLT. Not only does the NLT translation leave out *word*, but it changes the words *Sodom and Gomorrah* in this passage to *Israel* (even TLB does not do this). Isaiah is certainly speaking to the people of Israel (Sodom and Gomorrah, by this time, were long gone); however, the use of those proper names indicates how far Israel has fallen. There are several passages where the inspiration of the very words of the Bible is indicated in the original, but in the NLT, this is not as strongly emphasized:

NASB, slightly modified	passage	The New Living Translation
“But you will speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.	Ezek. 2:7	<i>You must give them my messages whether they listen or not. But they won’t listen, for they are completely rebellious!</i>
But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the wound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground. Then, behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.	Daniel 10:9–11	<i>When I heard him speak, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground. Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. Then the man said to me, “O Daniel, greatly loved of God, listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you.” When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling with fear.</i>
In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.	John 1:1–3, 14	<i>In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn’t make...So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.</i>

<sup>83</sup> This may seem picky, as I realize that a careful reading of this passage in the NLT does not unequivocally state that God is changing His mind about a promise. However, a careful reading of what I said reveals that it just *seems* that way. Perhaps that helped to make my point.

<sup>84</sup> TLB reads: *I have thoroughly tested your promises and that is why I love them so much.*

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.	Hebrews 4:12	<i>For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.</i>
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As you will notice, the NLT is not completely worthless, nor does it back down on all things orthodox. There are simply times where other translations reveal what is in the original language, and the NLT sometimes hides or obscures that.

One of the important doctrines of orthodoxy is the body of believers, known as the *church*. It comes from the Greek word *ekklesiá* (ἐκκλησία) [pronounced *ek-klay-SEE-ah*], which means *Church, assembly*. Strong's #1577. There are several instances where TLB leaves out the word *church* where it belongs, but only one place where the NLT did so.

A literal translation	passage	The New Living Translation
...praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to the church day by day those who were being saved.	Acts 2:47	<i>...all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the lord added to their group those who were being saved.</i>
For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it.	Gal. 1:13	<i>You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted the Christians.</i>

The NLT does not leave out the word *church* in Acts 8:3 11:26 14:27 15:3–4 16:5 I Cor. 1:2 10:32 11:18 14:5, 19, 28 II Cor. 1:1 8:23–24 Gal. 1:22 Eph. 3:21 5:32 Phillip. 4:15 (these are passages where TLB did leave out the word *church*). In Gal. 1:13, by the way, the NLT footnotes that *Christians* is accurately rendered *church of God*.

A problem that I have with several modern English translations is that their *thought-for-thought* rendering too often sounds lame or trite. Whereas, the KJV offered us literary power, while remaining very faithful to the original, sometimes a newer translation offers insipid text, whereas, they have allowed themselves much greater freedom in translating, which could potentially result in translation which does not *have* to sound trite. Some examples are found below:

1Samuel 17:32	
NLT	“Don’t worry about a thing,” David told Saul, “I’ll go fight this Philistine!”
NASB	And David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”
KJV	And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.
NKJV	Then David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”

The other three more literal versions not only give us a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew, but they are less colloquial, and therefore, seem to give this situation a reasonable amount of intensity. In the case of the NLT, I envision Curly (one of the 3 stooges), saying, “Don’t worry about a thing! He don’t look so tough to me!”

**Their Comments:** The NLT is a thought-for-thought translation, which is more accurate than a word-for-word translation (this is according to their introduction). Like the translators of the CEV, they point out that Scripture was meant to be read aloud, and that was taken into consideration when putting together this translation.

In making an updated translation, each book of the Bible was assigned to three reviewers, who apparently submitted their suggestions for revisions. I must admit that this was unclear to me, as translation issues were also covered later on.

**Layout:** Two columns, with explanatory notes at the bottom of the page, and there are two sets of footnotes pertaining to the references and the translation at the bottom of the second column of each page. I don't recall seeing this in another translation, and it is a very good idea. These different footnote references are clearly differentiated and easy to back track from, as the chapter and verse is listed with each note. This layout is great; however, the content of the various footnotes is not really that helpful.

Usually, the poetry looks like poetry (in the case of the Psalms; however, unexpectedly, Job is translated like prose).

Now, despite all of this fancy layout and the options available to the translators, they fall short in many areas. The psalms have titles and they also have parenthetical information which is properly formatted (like so many translations do, including the KJV). However, there are areas where such formatting should be applied, and is not. In the first nine chapters of 1Chronicles, we have a list of various genealogies. Each of these is properly titled in the original and at least one of them (Reuben's) has a parenthetical statement as we find in the psalms. However, the NLT translators do not appear to be aware of this and they must add a great deal of additional verbiage to make the first couple words of 1Chron. 5:1 blend in with that which follows. Furthermore, that which is parenthetical and would have been better served in italics or smaller print right below the title, is not properly reformatted in any such way. If we are going to go with modern formatting, then we should allow for Scripture to lead us to do it correctly.

**Section Headings:** The section headings are larger, darker, italicized and centered within the text. There seem to be more than are found in most Bibles.

**Footnotes:** In the corner of each page are the footnotes, which come in two varieties: Those marked with a bolded **R** are references and those marked with a bolded **T** refer to footnotes concerning the translation.

On the other hand, one problem is, the **NLT** leaves out a lot of information in their translation. For example, the MT of 1Sam. 2:33b reads: *...all the increase of your house will die as mortals*; the Greek and Dead Sea Scrolls read: *...every one that remains in thy house shall fall by the sword of men*. The **NLT** translates this as: *...and their children will die a violent death*. Now, we all know that the **NLT** does not pretend to be a literal rendering, so we can live with that translation. However, they footnote this to tell us that the LXX reads, instead *die by the sword*; they leave out *of men*. Why leave out what is actually there? Why not footnote this accurately? It may seem like a small thing, but why not be accurate when referring to ancient text? That is not too much to ask.

There are additional commentary notes on the bottom of the page are nowhere near as detailed as the NIV Study Bible, but they are reasonable, usually of a summative nature and generally correct. However, there are a significant number of commentary footnotes which are not helpful or accurate. There is even one instance where the footnote does not take into account the translation of the NLT, and therefore serves to confuse rather than enlighten. 1Sam. 14:18, in the NLT, reads: *Then Saul shouted to Ahijah, "Bring the ephod here!" For at that time Ahijah was wearing the ephod in front of the Israelites*. The footnote to this verse reads: *In light of the statement here, 7:2 may mean that while the Ark of the Covenant was headquartered at Kiriath-jearim for 20 years, it was occasionally moved.*<sup>85</sup> Now, unless you have studied this passage, you are left to wondering, "What's this about an Ark? There is no Ark in this verse (or, even in this chapter)." And, in the NLT, they have properly rendered a questionable word *ephod* rather than *Ark* (which I cover in great detail in my exegesis of that passage).

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<sup>85</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 382.

However, the change in text, which means that the NLT followed the LXX rather than the Masoretic (Hebrew) text, is not noted. Therefore, someone having no background on this passage would be left nonplused.

When it comes to their notes, some are quite good, but many will lead the average believer (particularly a new believer) off into legalism. Under one of their many *Christian's Guide for a New Life* (which is a prominently placed piece of doctrine), we have (in Psalm 73:1) **Walking in the Spirit: Confession**—*An important prerequisite to walking in the Spirit is the confession of sin. Sin must be confessed in order to restore fellowship and to continue receiving God's power (1 Jn 1:5–10).* Had they just stopped there, I would have applauded them. So few believers have any clue that God requires them to name their sin (or sins) when they commit a sin. However, the Open Bible then adds: *Confession means that we agree with God about our sin. This involves much more than simply acknowledging the sin. Confession requires an attitude of sorrow for the sin and a willingness to turn from it. It does not mean that we will never commit the same sin again, but it does mean that the attitude of repentance is present.*<sup>86</sup> Now, I certainly realize that is how most of you, who are reading this, think. You think that you must put forth some kind of effort, some sort of feeling in order for God to really forgive you. Don't be stupid. God forgives you on the basis of what His Son did on the cross. Jesus paid in full for every sin that you have committed and every sin that you will commit. There is no extra effort that you need to add to assist Him in this matter. That is legalism. God provides for us a simple, non-meritorious way to restore our fellowship with Him, just as He originally provided us a simple, non-meritorious way to come into His grace in the first place. Therefore, some of the notes can begin to get the believer off balance early on in his Christian life.

There are historical inaccuracies in the NLT's footnotes. One of the areas of difficulty for any student is the destruction of Shiloh, an incident which is alluded to but never actually covered historically in Scripture. In a footnote, which is otherwise very good, we find *Evidently, the original Tabernacle was destroyed at that time, although the Bible does not say so specifically. See Jer 7:12.*<sup>87</sup> The reason that *the Bible does not say so specifically* is because the Bible specifically tells us that King Solomon, roughly 100 years after *the original Tabernacle was [supposedly] destroyed*, brought the original Tabernacle to the Temple. **Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place which was at Gibeon, for God's tent of meeting was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness** (2Chron. 1:3; see also 2Sam. 8:4ff). On the other hand, in the NLT, there is a 2-page article on the Tabernacle<sup>88</sup>, which is very accurate and follows the movement of the Tabernacle (and no mention is made of its ever being destroyed). More examples of poor and/or misleading footnotes: in Psalm 142, a psalm written by David while he was in the cave (Psalm 142:title), one footnote reads: *The Levites who received no land inheritance recognized God as their inheritance (Deut. 10:9). The Psalm either was a Levite or put himself in their place of total dependence on God.*<sup>89</sup> The author was David, a Judæan. A footnote on this same psalm says that the author was possibly referring to a real imprisonment. In the psalm, the author speaks of *his soul* being in prison (which they do not properly translate); since the author is David and he is writing from a cave, then this is obviously not a literal reference to a prison. Now, the Open Bible's notes go on to say, *most likely, [this is] a figure of speech,*<sup>90</sup> why suggest in the first place this might refer to a literal prison? This is obviously a case of where the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

Unfortunately, there are many examples where the footnotes are misleading. They translate 1Sam. 18:6 as follows: **But something happened when the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed Goliath. Women came out from all the towns along the way to celebrate and to cheer for King Saul, and they sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals.** The footnote for this verse reads *The original says "slaughter of the Philistines." Thus, this is not necessarily a reference to Goliath.*<sup>91</sup> First of all, if this is not necessarily a reference to Goliath, then why did they translate it that way in the first place (*Goliath* does not occur in the Hebrew

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<sup>86</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 767.

<sup>87</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 309.

<sup>88</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, pp. 131–132.

<sup>89</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 818.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 390.

or the Greek of that verse)? Secondly, the Hebrew reads *the Philistine*, not *Philistines*.<sup>92</sup> A person who only owns a **New Living Testament** would be under the wrong impression.

This does not mean that all of the footnotes in the NLT are bogus. On the same page as the footnote about the supposed destruction of the Tabernacle, and on the previous page, the footnotes are very good, and would be of great help to a new believer (or an older believer unfamiliar with the ceremonies and customs of Old Testament times). Whereas, the notes of the Scofield Bible are outstanding, and probably 99% accurate, the notes of the NLT should be read with a more critical eye.<sup>93</sup>

**Personal Comments:** To be honest, I was suspicious of this version, as it was recommended to me by a charismatic. I was concerned that the translation might be slanted in that way. However, I found no hint of charismatic leanings in this translation. In fact, I found the CEV leaning much more in that direction. I would recommend *the Open Bible* first and foremost because of its supplementary material, which is excellent for a new believer. The translation itself is acceptable, as long as one does not build any questionable or controversial doctrines upon it.

Some of the translation is interesting, to say the least; let me give you a side-by-side comparison:

<b>1Samuel 20:30</b>	
<b>NASB</b>	Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jess to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"
<b>NLT</b>	Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "You stupid son of a whore!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want David to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?"
<b>The Living Bible</b>	Saul boiled with rage. "You son of a bitch!" he yelled at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want this son of a nobody to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?"
<b>Young's Literal Translation</b>	And the anger of Saul burneth against Jonathan, and he saith to him, 'Son of a perverse rebellious woman! have I not known that thou art fixing on the son of Jesse to thy shame and to the shame of the nakedness of thy mother?'
I included the very literal <i>Young's Translation</i> along with the very accurate NASB. You will note that they both seem to lose something in the translation; however, the Living Bible seems to be rather expressive, and probably closer to the mark here.	

Let me give you some additional examples, which give you a feeling of immediacy from the NLT:

<sup>92</sup> *Philistines* in the plural occurs several times in that chapter of 1Samuel (vv. 17, 21); but *not* here.

<sup>93</sup> Scofield is **dispensational**, which is an accurate understanding of the history of man. However, there are a large group of believers who do not believe themselves to be dispensational (however, *all* believers believe, to some extent, in dispensations; even though they claim that they do not).

Young's Literal Translation	Passage	The New Living Translation
<p>And Zophar the Naamathite answereth and saith:—  Therefore my thoughts cause me to answer,  And because of my sensations in me.  The chastisement of my shame I hear,  And the spirit of mine understanding  Doth cause me to answer:  This hast thou known from antiquity?  Since the placing of man on earth?  That the singing of the wicked <i>is</i> short,  And the joy of the profane for a moment,  Though his excellency go up to the heavens,  And his head against a cloud he strike—  As his own dung for ever he doth perish,  His beholders say: 'Where <i>is</i> he?'</p>	<p>Job 20:1–7</p>	<p>Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: "I must reply because I am greatly disturbed. I have had to endure your insults, but now my spirit prompts me to reply.  Don't you realize that ever since people were first placed on the earth, the triumph of the wicked has been short-lived and the joy of the godless has been only temporary? Though the godless man's pride reaches to the heavens and though his head touches the clouds, yet he will perish forever, thrown away like his own dung. Those who knew him will ask, 'Where is he?'</p>
<p>Clearly, the NLT is much easier to read and to follow. You get a feeling of immediacy; you feel as though you are there. In the very literal and very accurate Young Translation, it is easy to lose your train of thought as you wade through this passage. At the very least, the NLT will give you the gist of the passage; at the very worst, it might mislead you as to what exactly is being said. If you have studied my exegetical studies, you will note that I often provide three translations; my third translation is very much in the same spirit of the NLT—it is certainly not a literal, word-for-word rendering, but more a thought-for-thought translation.</p>		

Recently, in exegeting 1Sam. 8, I placed the translation of the NLT next to that of the TEV. From reading my examination of these translations, you realize that my negative opinion of thought-for-thought translations has softened a great deal. Not only do I recognize their worth, but I recommend that everyone have a version like the NLT which is easy to understand on its first read. Interestingly enough, I have even found some passages which were easier to understand and simpler than what is found in the TEV, which probably has the lowest reading level of all the thought-for-thought translations (I've included the NASB for balance).

**1Sam. 8:9:**

NASB "Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn [lit., *testify to*] them and tell them of the procedure [lit., *custom*] of the king who will reign over them."  
NLT Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about how a king will treat them."  
TEV "So then, listen to them, but give them strict warnings and explain how their kings will treat them."

**1Sam. 8:11:**

NASB And he said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.  
NLT "This is how a king will treat you," Samuel said, "The king will draft your sons into his army and make them run before his chariots.  
TEV "This is how your king will treat you," Samuel explained. "He will make soldiers of your sons; some of them will serve in his war chariots, others in his cavalry, and others will run before his chariots."

in my opinion, the NLT is often easier to understand and clearer than the TEV. There have been numerous television advertisements for this Bible, and the voice over says something along the lines of, "The instant you read

this Bible, you understand it!" That is a pretty brazen statement, but, as far as I have studied, this appears to be the case. Almost any passage and almost any verse that you turn to and read, instantly makes sense upon first read. Now, when I exegete a verse, I might spend two or more hours on a single verse, the bulk of that time being spent on simply translating it. Had I picked up my NRSV or NASB and read the same verse, I still might be nonplused as to the meaning of that verse or passage. Not so with the NLT. When I read a verse from the NLT, I immediately understand their interpretation of what the verse says. Obviously, this we do not necessarily understand what the Bible means at any given point; but we certainly and immediately understand their interpretation (not translation) of any given passage.

I should also add that, when I began this project, I was very negative towards dumbed-down Bibles and paraphrased Bibles. However, I have since done a 180° on this opinion. If you are going to own more than one Bible, this would be an excellent second or third Bible to own.

**Additional Features:** I own what is called *The Open Bible*. Early on, there are study helps and suggestions, as well as *the Christian's Guide to the New Life*. This latter feature is very well laid out and excellent for a new believer. There is a topical index also early on which is one of the most extensive that I have seen. Within this topical index are several word studies with information about the meaning of the word in the original Greek or Hebrew. Such studies are good for beginners and for those who have never delved into the Greek or Hebrew. One criticism is that I would have liked to have seen the original Greek and Hebrew given along with the commentary (I realize that this was probably left out because the very letters themselves sometimes appear to be daunting to many).

However, in these notes called *the Christian's Guide to the New Life*, we have some egregious errors which will put the believer off into the sidelines early on. An example of this was covered earlier: **Walking in the Spirit: Confession**.

I liked the outlines given at the beginning of each book if only for the reason that they were in two-column form (which is more appropriate for an outline) and more could be gotten at a single glance than from a traditional one-column outline.

*The Open Bible* had several nice features when it came to notes. Scriptural references were kept separate from notes on the original text, which were separate from notes on individual verses. If various references were to be given for a particular verse, it would be footnoted with a bolded, superscript R.<sup>R</sup> Then below, in the lower right-hand corner, there would be an **R**, the verses which were to be referenced, and then, of course, the references. Other versions do something along these lines, but this was the easiest to follow (once you realize what they were doing). When there was a *translation* issue, it would be marked with a bolded, superscript T,<sup>T</sup> and below the references would be comments on the translation. There were relatively few of these, and they were only moderately helpful.

Also, on each page, at the very bottom, there were several types of additional notes, as well as black and white pictures and photographs. There were no superscripts above for these notes. The result is fairly unobtrusive. However, when it comes to the actual content of the notes themselves, it was probably the least worthwhile notes included with a Bible. Too often, unfortunately, these notes were misleading, incorrect, or wild, unsubstantiated guesses (at least in the Old Testament). The inaccuracy of these notes made me question the accuracy of their translation. In my exegetical study of various books of the Old Testament, I rarely made any reference to these notes.

The introductions to the individual books were quite good, particularly for the new believer. We have a brief informational section, followed by the author (with both internal and external evidences cited). The time of the book is given. If our Lord appears in the book in shadow form, we are informed of that. Then key verses, an easy to follow outline, a survey, and a boxed topical outline (I don't know what else to call it) are given. Since few pastors carefully teach God's Word as they should, these little extras are invaluable aides to the new believer. Along with this are two types of outlines. The typical introduction to a chapter is 3–4 pages and these are well worth reading.



In the back, there is also a guide to Christian workers. One might think of this as, *okay, I've been saved for awhile and I have grown somewhat; now what?* It is a fairly good primer on evangelizing, with various objections and their answers given.

*The Scarlet Thread of Redemption* gives a fairly concise, readable overview of Scripture—the entire scope of the Bible is covered in 4 pages.

Also, as you read through this particular version of this translation, there are notes over various topics. E.g., in Job 1, we have over a half column of notes dealing with *Responses to Suffering*. In Job 2, we have almost a full column devoted to the *Purposes of Suffering*. However, we do not find such notes with every chapter. The next set of notes is less than a half column on *Memorizing God's Word* in Job 22.

Additional features: Prayers of the Bible; a calendar for reading your Bible in a year; a harmonizing of the gospels, including references outside the gospels; first time things are mentioned in the Bible (this is kind of goofy); the teachings and illustrations of our Lord, as well as His parables and miracles; archaeological discoveries (which looks to be very good) and, of course, the standard dictionary/concordance as well as maps (I have the same maps in my NKJV, which is also put out by Thomas Nelson Publishers)..

**Recommendations:** While I certainly prefer the NASB or God's Word™ for a more accurate translation, this would be a very good second or third Bible for a new believer (and it has been helpful at times to an old grizzled believer like myself). If you own one of the more literal translations and you do not use it very often simply because it seems abstruse to you, then, of the free translations, the NLT is one of the best to pick up. The translation is very readable and the *Open Bible* has a lot of nice features for a new believer. Always bear in mind, however, that what you read in the NLT is not necessarily in accordance with the text of the original and that most of the changes which they make are not always according to some other *better* source. Furthermore, they do not footnote all of their changes (a big negative, in my opinion) and, although some of the additional material is very good, some of it is inaccurate and some is maudlin. For your spiritual growth and understanding of the Scriptures, you should always depend upon a **pastor teacher** rather than upon personal Bible study.

**Additional Notes:**

## The New Revised Standard Version

### Version examined:

**Summation:** The NRSV is a translation by committee, including Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish scholars). Although it is a fairly literal translation, in my opinion, it is the least of the literal translations.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The New Revised Standard Version

**Translators:** Put together by an ecumenical (Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish) committee of scholars in the United States. This carries with it the *imprimatur*<sup>94</sup> that indicates that the Roman Catholics may use this translation.

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Used Hebrew instead of Greek (Judges 1:18). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. In Judges 2:3, the translator went with the Greek and the Vulgate rather than with the Hebrew (they do, however, mention the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew). Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NEB will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. The NRSV followed the Greek rather than the Hebrew in Judges 15:5, but footnoted the difference. There is a missing passage from Judges 16:13–14, which is found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. This is included in the translation of the NRSV and appropriately footnoted. The NRSV will sometimes defer to the Greek text and footnote it (e.g., Judges 17:10 19:18 Job 15:30 1Sam. 1:9, 11 4:1). However, if there is no obvious scribal error, they follow the Massoretic text (e.g., Judges 18:17–18 1Sam. 14:14<sup>95</sup> 1Chron. 1:51a). In the case of 1Chron. 1:51, they do what most translations do, and separate this verse in two. And sometimes they just simply follow the Greek (Judges 15:5 16:13–14 19:18). **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NRSV follows the Greek, and footnotes the differences.

The translators of the **NRSV** were also cognizant of the manuscripts discovered at Qumran (the **Dead Sea Scrolls**). **In fact, when it comes to variant readings based upon the Dead Sea Scrolls, your best reference is the NRSV.** There are some exceptions, however; 1Sam. 2:22 has a phrase dealing with Eli's sons having sex with the women of the Tent of Meeting; the **NRSV** leaves that phrase in without footnoting it; the **NAB** brackets the phrase and tells us, in a footnote, that it is not found in the Dead Sea Scrolls or in the oldest Greek manuscripts. However, don't misunderstand my point here. The NAB has this one lone reference in 1Sam. 2 to the Dead Sea Scrolls; in the same chapter, the **NRSV** has over ten references to the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1Sam. 1:22, Samuel is offered by his mother as a *Nazarite*, which is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Massoretic text. Interestingly enough, only the **NAB** has the same rendering. There is at least one instance where

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<sup>94</sup> This means license, sanction or approval.

<sup>95</sup> 1:14?

the **NRSV** follows the Greek and the DSS's, where no other translation does (1Sam. 6:3); and, when examined carefully, only that translation makes sense (it might require a full exegesis of the passage to grasp that; however, apart from the **NRSV**, I would not have been able to correctly exegete that particular passage).

Unfortunately, what we lack in this Bible is some reasonable consistency. For instance, in 1Sam. 2:20, there are two changes in the translation which the **NRSV** does, which is in keeping with the DSS and the Greek Septuagint. However, in v. 22, there is one entire line missing from the DSS and from the Greek Septuagint (the second line of that verse which deals with Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, who sin by having sex with all of the women at the Tent of God), and the **NRSV** keeps this line without so much as a footnote. We have the same thing in 1Sam. 3:4, 10; in v. 4, the **NRSV** follows the Greek (and DSS), but not in v. 10 (although consistently following the Greek would have been just as smooth of a translation). And again, there is no footnote in v. 10 to indicate that the Greek and the Dead Sea Scrolls are different from the Hebrew. So, even though this is the best Bible with regards to the changes which are found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, it will not tell you everything. In the same chapter, a less significant passage, vv. 31–32 is also dramatically different in the Greek and DSS; however, there is no mention of that in the **NRSV**. If I was to make but one suggestion to the translators of the **NRSV**, it would be to include all variant readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls when in agreement with the Greek Septuagint, if only noted in a footnote. While this translation is presently the best with regards to using the Dead Sea Scrolls, I would still rate it mediocre as it could be a lot better.<sup>96</sup>

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. This is one of the translations which shows a strong deference to the KJV.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments as well as the **apocrypha**. This is the only translation, that I am aware of, which has 4 Maccabees in the apocrypha.

**Vocabulary:** Sophomore or Junior High School level. There is no dumbing-down in order to achieve a readable text.

### Grade Level:

### Assumptions Made:

**Bias:** I must admit that I ran into a bias of the NRSV that I did not expect to. In 1Sam. 10:10b, Saul begins prophesying along with four other prophets. However, the NRSV renders this: [...he fell into a prophetic frenzy with them](#). This same sort of slant is given to 1Sam. 19:20. The original RSV does not have this sort of a rendering; they simply indicate that the prophets are *prophesying*. The rendering that we find in the NRSV reveals a strong deference to of influence of the **charismatic movement**.

**Description of Translation:** A more literal translation. That is, it follows the rules and grammar of the Greek and Hebrew as opposed to those of the English language. I was never a big fan of the RSV; however, this is a very readable, yet reasonable translation.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Traditional

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<sup>96</sup> All other translations, would receive ratings of *poor* to *very poor* in this regard, with the exception of Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible*. Unfortunately, Rotherham translated this Bible prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

**Strong Points:** The **NRSV** seems to, more than any other translation, make use of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**; and they footnote the changes with references to the DSS's. So if you want to know what differences are found in the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, you need a copy of the **NRSV**.

**Weak Points:** Sometimes, even when there is clear precedent for a passage, e.g., Joshua 15:59b being found in the Septuagint, but missing in the MT, the **NRSV** will leave this out as well.

**Criticisms:** One of my biggest set of criticisms is with their footnotes, which could have been outstanding, yet they were only good. Remarks to follow under footnotes below.

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry and prose looks like prose.

**Section Headings:** I had no section headings in my version (*The Complete Parallel Bible*). I don't know if there is an addition where they have section headings.

**Footnotes:** The footnotes could have been better. The **NRSV** actually has relatively few footnotes, but those that it has are extremely important by way of textual criticism (i.e., does the text say *this* or *that*?). However, it is more difficult to proceed back from the footnote to the text, as you must search out the small footnote letters in the text (easier for young eyes to do). Contrast the **NASB**, the **NIV** or the **REB** where the footnote tells you what verse is being footnoted.

In several of their references to the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the **NRSV** footnotes: *Gk Compare Q Ms*. However, even though this tells us that their reading agrees with the Greek; it does not really tell us whether or not their reading agrees with the DSS's. A little more detail here would have been appreciated. There are other footnotes which read *Hebrew lacks "thus and so."* Such a footnote *implies*, but does not state, that manuscripts in other languages are different. How tough would it be to say, *some Greek manuscripts read... or the Aramaic targum reads...*

The second biggest problem with the **NRSV** is its footnotes (again); or, actually, its lack thereof. Throughout Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament, we have variant readings. Sometimes—or, actually, quite often—the **NRSV** follows these variant readings—particularly when they are in agreement with the Dead Sea Scrolls. And it footnotes these changes, some more carefully than others. This is good, you are thinking, and it is. The problem is, when there is a significant variant reading, but the **NRSV** chooses to stay with the Massoretic text, it does *not* footnote this. There are some who study Scripture who do not have 20 different Bibles—they have two or three. If the **NRSV** footnoted all of the variant readings (or, at least the most important ones), it would be indispensable to those who study Scripture. If anything, Rotherham went overboard with the listing of variant readings in *The Emphasized Bible* and he put together his excellent translation a half a century prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, it is better to be thorough than not. What the **NRSV** could and should do is to be the modern literal translation with most or all of significant variant readings.

Another problem is, the **NRSV** leaves out a lot of information in their translation. For example, the MT of 1Sam. 2:33b reads: *...all the increase of your house will die as mortals*; the Greek and the Dead Sea Scrolls read: *...every one that remains in thy house shall fall by the sword of men*. The **NRSV** translate this as: *...all the members of your household shall die by the sword*. They footnote this to tell us that the MT text reads, instead *die as mortals*; why not also point out in the footnote that the Greek actually reads *die by the sword of men*? This may seem like a minor point to you, but the **NRSV** acts as though it is one of the more literal translations; therefore, it should tell us what we find in the actual literal text, even if only in a footnote.

My third criticism deals with the footnotes again (and this is one mentioned earlier). This is about the formatting of this particular translation. I cannot look at the footnote and determine where the footnote came from. I must search the entire page for the very tiny footnote letters to find what is being footnoted. How easy it would be to introduce each footnote with the chapter and verse to which the footnote refers (as the **REB** does).

My final criticism of the footnotes is also easily remedied. Let me give you an example. Their translation of 1Sam. 16:6 reads: **When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is now before the LORD..”** The footnote for *LORD* reads Heb *him*. There are a myriad of problems with this footnote. First of all, the literal Hebrew reads: **And it was when they came that [lit., and] he saw Eliab and thought, “Surely in the sight of Y<sup>e</sup>howah [this man is] His anointed.”** There is no *him* (although, there is in the Greek Septuagint). So, to begin with, the footnote is inaccurate, as is the translation. But, even if the footnote were accurate, am I to understand that the Hebrew reads as per the footnote, but their translation came from some other ancient manuscript? Since their translation did not come from another ancient manuscript, why not footnote this *literally him?* (again, assuming that the footnote was correct to begin with). Then, the footnote does not carry with it the implication that their translation actually came from some legitimate source other than the Hebrew. It would be clear to the reader that their translation at this point is an interpretation, and the literal rendering is *him*.

These three criticisms are extremely important, easily repaired, and would make owning a copy of the **NRSV** an absolute must for those who do any detailed analysis of Scripture. It could be the only literal, modern version which (1) notes the variant readings and, (2) makes careful use of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Now, so that there is no misunderstanding, the footnotes in the **NRSV** are almost unique, giving us more information and insight into the original text as it is found in the **DSS**. However, they do a half-assed job of it. The translators, borrowing from the thoroughness of Rotherham, could have made the notes of their translation indispensable.

**Personal Comments:** The footnotes of the **NRSV** have more information from the **DSS** than any other translation that I am familiar with. This is a good feature which could have been a great feature had they done it right.

**Additional Features:** Although I have two different Bibles which are the **NRSV**, the one I use primarily is *The Complete Parallel Bible*. The NRSV comes with a minimal number of footnotes which deal primarily with different readings.

**Recommendations:** This is a good 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Bible. I would never use this translation as my primary Bible.

**Additional Notes:** The NRSV contains two versions of Esther; the original Hebrew version and the longer, Greek version, with the additions generally thought to be apocryphal.

Some time ago, I picked up a copy of *The Complete Parallel Bible*, thinking to myself, “The NRSV, REB, NAB and NJB—that is an unusual grouping of translations.” I no longer think that. Even though two of these are officially Catholic Bibles (i.e., they are accepted by the Catholic Church—the latter two) and two of them are protestant Bibles, they actually have a great deal in common. When the Septuagint offers an alternate reading, all four lean toward the Septuagint’s reading. They all are influenced by **charismatics**/mystics. Also, all of them translate several books of the Apocrypha (the Protestant REB and the NRSV actually translate more books than the other two).

## New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures

### Version examined:

**Summation:** This is the translated developed by the Jehovah's Witnesses for Jehovah's Witnesses. Certain critical passages are rendered specifically to uphold their peculiar doctrines.

### Preface:

**Translation:** *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. This is a Jehovah Witness specific Bible.

**Translators:** Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, which is an agency of the International Bible Students Association. The Bible is employed by the sect more commonly known as the Jehovah Witnesses.

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Used Hebrew instead of Greek (Judges 1:18 18:17–18 Job 15:30). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. The NWT more or less went their own way here, not translating Judges 2:3 with *sides* (as is found in the Hebrew) or with *adversaries* (which is found in the Greek and the Latin); then rendered this *snares*. To be fair, Owen also offers that translation. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the NEB will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. Followed the Greek rather than the Hebrew in Judges 15:5. On the other hand, there is missing text in Judges 16:13–14 which could be restored from the Greek, but the NWT does not, without even mentioning this in a footnote. The NWT follows the Greek in Judges 19:18 (thereby, skipping one of the times that they could have used the name *Jehovah* in their text). It follows the Hebrew in 1Chron. 1:51a (although it follows most translators, which separate the verse in two). As one would expect, their translation is not known for its consistency. On the other hand, **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew and the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the NWT still follows the Hebrew.

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. The NWT continually inserts the proper noun *Jehovah* in the New Testament, although it is not found anywhere in the New Testament in the original Greek.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

### Vocabulary:

### Grade Level:

### Assumptions Made:

**Bias:** This is a translation done by Jehovah's Witnesses, for Jehovah's Witnesses, so there are times when it will certainly be slanted in that direction (e.g., John 1:1–3) and the continued use of *Jehovah* in the New Testament, where this word is not found in the Greek. ZPEB makes some similar observations: *It is marred throughout by its very obvious bias in favor of the peculiar doctrines of the sect which produced it. Apart from this, it is of uneven quality, sometimes being stiffly literal and sometimes excessively colloquial.*<sup>97</sup>

There does not appear to be an inordinate influence of the **charismatic movement**, which is what we would expect.

**Description of Translation:** A very readable, but intentionally biased rendering of Scripture. Their purpose is stated to enlighten the reader, but often they obfuscate God's Word in order to promote one of their pet doctrines. This is a Bible which should come with a warning that it takes some very strong positions against traditional Christian doctrine, and often slants its own translation to fit its doctrine (John 1:1–3 is a perfect example of this).

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:** Same as the KJV.

**Strong Points:** There are times when this translation is very readable.

**Weak Points:** The JW's have a bias and that will be found throughout this Bible. Whereas, they can make a convincing argument to the unlearned about John 1:1, claiming that this should be rendered *a god*; they are not consistent and, insofar as I know, **nowhere else, do they render the same phrase the same way**. We are not talking one or two instances but hundreds of places where the word *God* occurs without a definite article. In one crucial place, this is rendered *a god*; and everywhere else, they render the exact same phrase as *God*. In fact, there are at least two instances where the JW's render *the god* as *god* or *a god*, because it so suits their purposes.

**Criticisms:** The JW's often render *Lord* in the New Testament as *Jehovah*, although there is no reason for doing so, apart from their theological predisposition. When we find the name *Jehovah* in the Old Testament, such a rendering is generally valid and accurate. The key is this: *Jehovah* in the Old Testament is Jesus in the New. We do not find the proper name *Jehovah* in the New Testament anywhere, because that designation generally referred to the revealed member of the Godhead, who became man and walked among us. If Jesus is the *Jehovah* of the Old Testament, then we would expect not to find the name *Jehovah* in the New Testament. If Jesus is not equivalent to *Jehovah*, then we would expect to find a number of passages in the New Testament (not just a few), where *Jehovah* God is clearly differentiated from Jesus the Messiah. Again, the only reason that we find the name *Jehovah* in the New World Translation's New Testament is that belies their theological predisposition.

Most of the more literal translations often render this word as LORD—small caps—in the Old Testament where it is appropriate. In Rotherham's translation, this is rendered *Yahweh* and in *Young's Literal Translation*, it is rendered *Jehovah*.

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** Each page has a heading at the very top (which makes little sense for the psalms).

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Because of the bias, this is one translation which I would never recommend. There are too many good, easy to read, English versions out there without requiring a person to use this version.

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<sup>97</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580.

## **Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:** I recommend that you avoid this translation.

**Additional Notes:** We do not know the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton YHWH; I believe it to be Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Rotherham (and others) render it as Yahweh, and many scholars use the more popular *Jehovah*, bearing in mind that this is, more or less, a mixture of the Tetragrammaton and the vowel points from Adonai. A great many translation, the KJV, the NASB, the NRSV, etc., render Jehovah in the Old Testament as LORD. This is explained, often, in the introduction (in fact, I am not aware of any Bible which has this convention, yet does not mention it). The reason for this is that the Jews would not say the proper name of God, and therefore, its correct pronunciation, owing to the lack of vowels in the original Hebrew, has been lost to us. Many translators have continued with the convention of the Hebrews, using the name Jehovah only a handful of times. It appears as though the KJV set the precedent here and many translations followed this precedent. The Jehovah's Witnesses make a big deal out of other translations not including God's proper name, *Jehovah*. Therefore, everything we find the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew, the JW's render this *Jehovah*. Now, there is nothing wrong with this approach, although a footnote indicating that we do not know what the pronunciation of His name is would have been nice to have. Neither Young and Rotherham, who produced possibly the best English translations of Scripture, with regards to being literal, follow the convention of the KJV.

However, it is in the New Testament where the bias of the JW's becomes more apparent. In the New Testament Greek manuscripts, we do not have the name *Jehovah*—not even once. There is a theological reason for this. *Jehovah* of the Old Testament is *Jesus* in the New. Now the Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that; and they do not like the fact that *Jehovah* cannot be found in the New Testament; therefore, in many places where the Greek word *Lord* appears, where it refers specifically to *God the Father* (or, if the argument could be made that it is a reference to *God the Father*), they render this word *Jehovah* (e.g., Matt. 1:20, 22, 24 2:19). When this word is attached to Jesus Christ (as in Matt. 7:21–22 8:2, 6, 8 Rom. 1:4, 7), it is translated *Lord* and sometimes as *Sir* (John 1:11, 13, 19). When the Greek word (Κύριος) is applied to man and not to God, it is rendered *owner* (Mark 12:9) or *master* (Matt. 13:27 18:31–32 John 15:20). I cannot even find one instance where they render it as *lord*. Now, every translation distinguishes between Κύριος being applied to man or to God; only the JW Bible distinguishes between it being interpreted as applying to *God the Father* or to *Jesus Christ*. However, the most important thing to realize here is that, even though the word *Jehovah* is not found in the Greek of the New Testament, the Jehovah's Witnesses insert it. Again, their translation is dogma-driven, and therefore, consistency will not be its strong point.



## Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament

**Translators:** John Joseph Owen, who taught Hebrew for 35 years at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

**Date of Translation:** 1989.

**Stated Purpose:** This four volume set is first and foremost an almost word-by-word morphological study of the Hebrew, rather than a translation. The translation is included almost as an afterthought. The translation is absolutely necessary so that we have a foothold relative to where we are in the Bible (for those who read little or no Hebrew), but it often defaults to the RSV (although it is original in a significant portion). That being understood, the preface explains: *This key is intended to assist the person who knows some Hebrew but has not retained interpretive or grammatical discernment. The user of this volume must supplement this information with his/her own interpretive skill. For instance, the use of a Hiph'il form when a Qal form is available is an important nuance. Since there are no such things as absolute synonyms, one must be alert to the specific grammatical structures utilized in the text...From a translation, one cannot be positive that the innuendos of the Hebrew text are properly understood. The interpreter should be alert to such things as the verbal structures, the presence or absence of the definite article, the construct relationships as distinguished from the adjectival construction, and the waw conjunctives and/or consecutives...This key seeks to provide complete grammatical and lexicographical information for each word of the entire canon. Each form has been identified. The presence of definite articles, prepositions, and conjunctions is noted. Nouns are clearly explained as to usage and relationship. Each grammatical explanation provides the reader with information that must be used in defining the various shades of meaning.*<sup>98</sup>

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** in the preface, it is stated that the Hebrew text which is used is *the best complete Ben Asher text available (K. Ellinger and W. Rudolph, eds., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia [Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1977]).*<sup>99</sup>

Because of the nature of his translation, Owen stays with the Hebrew manuscript, but he will occasionally point out where there are significant differences between the Greek and Hebrew and when there are alternate readings in the Hebrew, as well as disputed readings. Unfortunately, Owen does not always do this (he does do it for most of the more significant passages, however). Furthermore, Owen occasionally gives the Greek text, but does not translate it for the English reader (e.g., Job 15:30–32). There are some errors which you would be completely unaware of if it were not for Owen. He is the only translator that I know of who points out that, in the Hebrew, *cities* is actually *asses* in Judges 10:4. The correct reading should be *cities*, but one would never know there was a problem there apart from him or reading the original Hebrew. He does follow the Hebrew of course in such passages as Judges 10:4 15:5 19:18. Where the reasonableness of the Greek over the Hebrew is clear, Owen sometimes includes the Greek, but he is inconsistent at this point. The Greek addendum to Judges 16:13 is found

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<sup>98</sup> *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; John Joseph Owens; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1989; Vol. 1, p. ix–x.

<sup>99</sup> *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; John Joseph Owens; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; ©1989; Vol. 1, p. x.

(he only gives the Greek; he does not translate it), but the missing Greek from Judges 16:14 18:17–18 is not mentioned. My thinking is that Owen either does not know the Greek or this was an oversight on his part.

The purpose of Owen's interlinear translation is to let us know what is in the Hebrew text. When it comes to Job 15:11–12, it does allude to the Greek verb in v. 12b, and thereby passes this particular test. However, in **1Sam. 13:15**, the Greek and the Hebrew are very different and the error appears to be with the Hebrew. Owen, of course, follows the Hebrew, but neglects to footnote the Greek.

**Portion Translated:** Old Testament only.

**Vocabulary:** The translation itself is relative easy to follow; however, the words dealing with the Hebrew language information are moderately difficult.

**Grade Level:** Junior and Senior High School level for the translation (again, which defaults to the RSV).

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** Owen leans toward the NRSV, which, in some places, is problematic. However, there are several passages in Owen's translation which are rendered differently, and correctly so. 1Sam. 10:10b comes to mind. Owen follows the Hebrew and the NRSV follows their own interpretation of the Hebrew.

**Description of Translation:** Essentially an interlinear translation, having the Hebrew side-by-side the English.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Owen follows the Hebrew text with regards to the numbering of the verses and chapters, although it alludes periodically to our verse arrangement (e.g., the preface to each psalm, which is a part of the Hebrew Bible, is labeled as verse 1). However, the arrangement of the books of the Bible follows our English Bible.

**Strong Points:** No punctuation, Hebrew morphology of verbs and nouns are given.

**Weak Points:** The translation is not as literal as it should be. He will often default to the RSV.

Prepositions are identified only as prepositions and are not differentiated.

Owen should have spent more time dealing with emendations and alternate readings.

Time should be given to including perhaps a 10–20 page Hebrew primer, explaining the difference between a Qal imperfect and an Hiphil imperative, making clear the meaning of a pausal or a cohortative.

There are more mistakes in this than one would expect. On the other hand, this is a very specialized set of books unlikely to be at the top of the list for most believers (although it *should* be for every pastor). Therefore, what you see is what you get. If this was re-published within the next decade with some of the mistakes fixed and the consideration given to the weak points which I noted, I would be completely surprised. I would also be first in line to buy another complete set. Now it may seem as though I have noted a great many shortcomings of this set. I have noticed these shortcomings only because I have spent so much time *using* this set of books. The more often you use something, the more you recognize what might have been done better.

**Criticisms:** There are actually a lot of mistakes in this four volume set. My thinking is that, when Owens began this project, he spent more time on it. However, when the complete set was asked for, he had to work like gang busters to get it finished—hence, a great many errors (say, 1 or 2 per page). Most of these are minor, e.g., the wrong BDB page number. See weak points above.

**Their Comments:** .*Translation is the art of transferring the thoughts expressed in one language and culture to the syntax, style, and words of a different language and culture. Much more is involved than the simple replacement of one Hebrew word with an English word. Even though there are many excellent translations, the original text and/or a translation must be interpreted for an understanding of the form, style, nuance, and context of the author. This analytical key seeks to provide the basic elements necessary for valid interpretation. Since it is very difficult to transfer one linguistic, sociological, religious context into a completely different milieu, it is imperative to examine the specific “building blocks” of the original writing in order to establish distinct boundaries of meaning.*<sup>100</sup>

**Layout:** Two column format, but not as you would expect. First there will be one or two Hebrew words, followed by an identification of the parts of speech found and a complete morphology of adjectives, nouns and verbs, followed by the BDB page number, followed by the RSV or a corrected translation of those couple words. In fact, rather than tell you what is there, let me just give you an example of Gen. 1:1:

1:1
<p> רָאשִׁית prep.—n.f.s. cstr. (912; GK 5n,21b,142g) <i>In beginning</i>  בָּרָא Qāl pf. 3 m.s. (135) <i>created</i>  אֱלֹהִים n.m.p. (43; GK 125f,145h) <i>God</i>  אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם dir.obj.—def.art.—n.m. du. (1029 GK 117i) <i>the heavens</i>  וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ conj.—dir.obj.—def.art.—n.f.s. (75) <i>and the earth</i><sup>101</sup> </p>
<p>The first number stands for the location of the word in BDB; GK stands for Gesenius-Kautzsch, which is another language source, and where this can be located in that source (I own a lexicon by Gesenius, which does not appear to match up with this particular one).</p>

**Section Headings:** None.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Invaluable to a person attempting to get at the original language.

**Additional Features:** As mentioned, the thrust of this four volume set is not to be a new translation, but to provide an invaluable linguistic aide for those interested in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament. For those who use Zodhiates' *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, you may think you've got what you need. Although I would not part with my copies of Zodhiates' works, I use Owen's book much more often. As I exegete any passage, Owen's book is always open next to me. Zodhiates' book is off to the side, unopened, for occasional reference.

**Recommendations:** This is a unique aide and invaluable to me personally. I could not imagine doing the exegetical work which I do without Owen's work at my side. Every exegete, pastor and pastor-in-training who is serious about teaching the Word of God should own this four volume set. If you are taking a class in Biblical Hebrew and you are serious about it, this will be the best \$100 that you ever spent.

**Additional Notes:** If you are going to own just one Hebrew interlinear, this should be the one, despite the cost.

<sup>100</sup> *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; John Joseph Owens; Baker Book House, Grand Rapid, Michigan; ©1989; Vol. 1, p. ix.

<sup>101</sup> *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; John Joseph Owens; Baker Book House, Grand Rapid, Michigan; ©1989; Vol. , p. 1.

## The Revised English Bible

### Version examined:

**Summation:** One of the most readable of the modern English translations. The vocabulary employed in this translation is not dumbed down for easier reading; however, for the most part, this translation has a very nice flow to it. This rendering has a good, literary feel to it, despite the fact that so many hands were involved in its translation. This is not a word for word translation, but a thought-for-thought rendering. Even so, the REB is reasonably accurate.

### Preface:

**Translation:** The Revised English Bible

**Translators:** Put together by an ecumenical (Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish) committee of scholars in Great Britain. Even though this translation does not carry the *imprimatur*, which indicates that it is specifically accepted by the Catholic Church, this Bible translation was still *sponsored* by all of the churches in the British Isles, including the Catholic church.

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18 1Sam. 1:14. In Judges 2:3, they did not go with the Greek or the Hebrew, but gave a much less literal rendering here. Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the **NEB** will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. The **REB** went with the Greek rather than the Hebrew in Judges 15:5 (it used the *and*) as well as in 1Sam. 2:2 (where it is the only translation that I am aware of that chose the word *righteous*, the Greek translation, over *rock*, the Hebrew). Where the Greek clearly contains missing text from the Hebrew in Judges 16:13–14, the **REB** does include it as the end of v. 13, footnoting that it is from the Greek. The **REB** often goes with the Greek text (e.g., Judges 17:10 19:18 Job 15:30); and, as it should, generally footnotes what it is doing. However, when there is no obvious scribal error, the **REB** will follow the Hebrew (e.g., Judges 1:18 18:17–18 1Sam. 1:14 14:14). In 1Chron. 1:51a, it treats v. 51 as one verse, indicating that the chiefs from Edom followed the kings who are listed (which is actually the gist of the Hebrew, as *wâw* consecutives are used in this verse). **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the REB follows the Greek, and footnotes the differences.

The **REB** reasonably translates Job 15:11–12, despite its occasionally *too-free* translation. So that you can see the Greek, Hebrew and REB side-by-side:

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	REB
15:11	"[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?"	"You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	Does not consolation from God suffice you, a word whispered quietly in your ear?

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	REB
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash,	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	What makes you so bold at heart, and why do your eyes flash,
15:13	that you turn around unto God your spirit and you cause to go out from your mouth [such] words.”	That you have vented rage before the Lord and you have delivered such words from [your] mouth”	that you vent your anger on God and pour out such mouthfuls of words?

As you will note, the **REB** stayed pretty close to the original text in this instance.

One thing which I have noticed with the **REB** is that it sometimes relies upon manuscripts which are out of left field. There are infrequent occasions where the **REB** takes the rendering of the Greek Syriac translation (e.g., 1Sam. 1:28 20:12). In the case of 1Sam. 1:28, the rendering *they* (as opposed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular *he*) fits in well with the context, but we do not have the corroboration of other manuscripts here. What is particularly admirable about the **REB** is that it footnotes all of these occasions and makes references to the manuscripts from which they took their translation.

#### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

#### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments as well as the **apocrypha**. Does not contain 4 Maccabees.

#### Vocabulary:

**Grade Level:** This is an *English* translation—they aren't going to talk down to you (level: Junior/Senior in high school)

**Assumptions Made:** Old Testament often chooses Septuagint over the Massoretic Text.

**Bias:** This has, occasionally, a theologically liberal slant.

The influence of the **charismatic movement** is seen in a half-dozen or more translations, including this one. In 1Sam. 10:10b, we read: *...the spirit of God suddenly took possession of him, so that he too was filled with prophetic rapture.*

**Description of Translation:** A freer, more literary translation. That is, it follows the rules and grammar of English as opposed to those of the Greek or Hebrew.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized. Also, in some passages (e.g., 1Sam. 19:20), the word *spirit* is not capitalized, even though the entire phrase is *Spirit of God*.

**Order of Translation:** Traditional

**Strong Points:** Certainly, there are areas where one could criticize pretty much any translation. However, there are times when the REB is both insightful and accurate. Some examples follow below:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	REB
Psalm 10:15	Break [the] arm [or, <i>strength</i> ] of the wicked and [the] evil [one]; You seek out his evil—You do not find [it] [or, <i>You find none</i> ].	Break the arm of the sinner and wicked man; his sin will be sought for and you will not find [it].	Break the power of the wicked and evil person, hunt out his wickedness until you can find no more.

From the standpoint of textual criticism, there is one very positive note concerning the **REB**: whenever it gives a particularly translation which does not appear to match most other Bible translations, it will footnote that rendering and either tell which manuscript or manuscripts were used or indicate that there were problems with the Hebrew text (which is often the case).

**Weak Points:** 1Sam. 7:2 reads: *For a long while, some twenty years in all, the Ark was housed in Kiriath-jearim, then there was a movement throughout Israel to follow the LORD.* The **REB** makes it sound as though the Ark remained in Kiriath-Jearim for only 20 years, when in fact, it was 60–100 years.

**Criticisms:** Now, this is a serious criticism: The **REB** occasionally makes changes in the text, footnotes these changes as the *probable reading*, yet does not cite a reason or an ancient manuscript which agrees with their rendering. If you own this Bible exclusively, you may come across one of these passages and take it for granted that they are correct and they know what they are doing. However, this is not the case. In 1Sam. 3:13, for instance, the **REB** renders the first verb as a 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, rather than as a 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, and they footnote this as *probable reading* and cite the Hebrew text in the footnote. What they don't do is mention that the Greek and the **Dead Sea Scrolls** are also in agreement with the traditional reading. In fact, I don't know of any ancient manuscript which is in agreement with their rendering of this verse. However, the implication of the footnote is that they have stated the probable reading; the Hebrew reads differently; and one would tend to read into that footnote that some other ancient manuscript agreed with them, thus prompting this change. Furthermore, given the context of the passage and the last few verses of the previous chapter, the reading of the Hebrew makes much more sense than their translation.

Another example is 1Sam. 3:13. Their translation and footnote are as follows: *You are to [You are to: probable reading; Hebrew I shall] tell him that my judgement on his house will stand for ever because he knew of his sons' blasphemies against God and did not restrain them.* It is presumptuous for the REB to state that theirs is the probable reading, as we have no support for this view, apart from their say-so. It would be important to note that *all of the ancient readings differ with REB's probable reading.*<sup>102</sup>

Let me give you another major criticism: their choice of which manuscript to follow is sometimes inexplicable. As you know, we have the Hebrew Massoretic text; we have the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament; we have manuscripts discovered in Qumran (the **Dead Sea Scrolls**); and we have a host of other ancient translations. Admittedly, if you have five different manuscripts giving five different readings, making a correct choice is rather difficult. However, in 1Sam. 6:3, the Hebrew says one thing and the Dead Sea Scrolls says something else, which is in agreement with the Greek Septuagint. Almost without thinking, when the Dead Sea Scrolls are in agreement with Greek, that is going to be my preference. Furthermore, the context of this passage is also more in keeping with Greek (see my exegesis of 1Sam. 6). So, what does the **REB** do? They follow the Hebrew and do not even footnote the alternate (and more sensible) rendering. Now, notice just how inconsistent they can be: in 1Sam. 6:19, they follow the Greek rather than the Hebrew, even though the Dead Sea Scrolls apparently support the Hebrew Massoretic text. Oh, and the Hebrew text of v. 19 jives better with the context. My point is that the **REB** can be terribly inconsistent, and not simply because one translation team does one portion of Scripture and another team does another, but that the same team of translators make several bad decisions in the same chapter of which manuscript to follow.

<sup>102</sup> The translation of the REB also would cause us problems of interpretation later on in this chapter.

Sometimes the freer approach to the translation results in a translation which says something that the original did not. In 1Sam. 18:1–2 (which are reordered and combined in the **REB**), it sounds as though Saul chose to keep David around permanently because Jonathan liked him so much. *That same day, when Saul had finished talking with David, he kept him and would not let him return any more to his father’s house, for he saw that Jonathan had given his heart to David and had grown to love him as himself.* It almost sounds as though Jonathan has a homosexual love for David in their translation (the **NJB** gives the same impression).

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Poetry looks like poetry and prose like prose.

**Section Headings:** I had no section headings in my version (*The Complete Parallel Bible*). I don’t know if there is an addition where they have section headings.

**Footnotes:** Probably the most irritating thing about the few footnotes is that they do not contain much information. For instance, in 1Sam. 17:12, the Greek leaves out the words *Bethlehem in Judah*, so the **REB** leaves it out as well. Their footnote reads: *prob. rdg: Heb. adds* Is this the man from Bethlehem in Judah? I would have preferred to see *prob. rdg. as per LXX α: Heb. adds...* With very few additional words, this would have told the reader the basis of deviating from the Masoretic text. 1Sam. 18:6 is another example. When David is victorious in battle, the women of Israel come out *singing and dancing*. The **REB** footnotes *singing* and notes *or watching*. Even though I have access to two dozen other translations, as well as the Masoretic and Greek texts and several Hebrew lexicons, I do not have a clue as from where the translators of the **REB** got this. Furthermore, even if this is some obscure meaning of that particular Hebrew verb, it makes a lot less sense in this context. Given that there are very few notes to be found in the **REB**, one would think that a footnote like this was wasted typesetting.

There are times when a verse screams for a footnote, but the **REB** does not have one. For instance, the Hebrew text of 1Sam. 17:4 reads *six cubits [and a span]*. However, the Septuagint, which the **REB** translators *often* follow, and the Dead Sea Scrolls read *four cubits [and a span]*. I have no problem that the **REB** translators went with *six cubits* (although I disagree with them about that choice); however, they should have told us via a footnote that the **LXX** and the **DSS** have an alternate reading. When a translation often follows the **LXX**, they should also footnote where they choose to follow the MT instead of the **LXX**.

That being said, I must point out that the **REB** translators take an interesting approach to footnotes. There are no indications in the verse itself that there is a footnote on that verse. However, at the bottom of the page, the specific verse is noted and comments, generally about the translation and alternate readings, follows. You might be right to say, “Then these are textual/commentary notes, and not footnotes.” Strictly speaking, yes; however, it is the content of these notes which separates them from textual/commentary notes. All of these notes deal with the particular text which is followed, and that the **REB** chose this phrasing rather than that phrasing, based upon, say, the **LXX** rather than the MT. You might say that these are footnotes which lack a superscript footnote indicator; they are unobtrusive footnotes. My biggest problem, again, is that there were not enough of these footnotes, nor were they as detailed as they should have been. The lack of a superscript indicator is a good thing, in my opinion (or, a neutral thing).

**Personal Comments:** I had always assumed that the REB was the successor to the NEB. Not only do we have the similarity of names but some verses are almost exactly the same.

Passage	NASB	NEB	REB
1Sam. 2:4	“The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength.”	Strong men stand in mute dismay, but those who faltered put on new strength.	Strong men stand in mute dismay, but those who faltered put on new strength.

Passage	NASB	NEB	REB
Job 16:12b–13	He has also set me up as His target. His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours out my gall on the ground.	He set me up as his target; his arrows rained upon me from every side; pitiless, he cut deep into my vitals, he spilt my gall on the ground.	He set me up as his target; his arrows rained on me from every side; pitiless, he pierced deep into my vitals, he spilt my gall on the ground.
Job 16:20	My friends are my scoffers; My eye weeps to God.	My appeal will come before God, while my eyes turn again and again to him.	My appeal will come before God, while my eyes turn anxiously to him.
Job 19:26	“Even after my skin is destroyed [lit., <i>which they have cut off</i> ], Yet from my flesh I shall see God;	and I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself,	I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself.

On the other hand, there are areas where they are strongly divergent; one area in specific is the rendering of *glôssa* (γλῶσσα) in the New Testament. In I Cor. 13–14, *glôssa* is rendered *tongues*, *tongues of ecstasy* and *language of ecstasy* in the **NEB**. It is simply *tongues* in the **REB**.

However, what I should point out as well is that some verses of the **NEB** have Old English phrases in them. The **REB** has rid itself of this phraseology, making it the superior translation:

Passage	NEB	REB
Psalm 44:13	Thou hast exposed us to the taunts of our neighbors, to the mockery and contempt of all around.	You have exposed us to contempt of our neighbors, to the gibes and mockery of those about us.
Psalm 73:7–12	Their eyes gleam through folds of fat; while vain fancies pass through their minds. Their talk is all sneers and malice; scornfully they spread their calumnies. Their slanders reach up to heaven, while their tongues ply to and fro on earth. And so my people follow their lead and find nothing to blame in them, even though they say, ‘What does God know? The Most High neither knows nor cares.’ So wicked men talk, yet still they prosper, and rogues amass great wealth.	Their eyes gleam through folds of fat, while vain fancies flit through their minds. Their talk is all mockery and malice; high-handedly they threaten oppression. Their slanders reach up to heaven, while their tongues are never still on earth. So the people follow their lead and find in them nothing blameworthy. They say, ‘How does God know? Does the Most High know or care?’ Such are the wicked; unshakeably secure, they pile up wealth.
Psalm 73:23–24	Yet I am always with thee, thou holdest my right hand; thou does guide me by thy counsel and afterwards wilt receive me with glory.	Yet I am always with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me by your counsel and afterwards you will receive me with glory.



Neither version is readily available in the United States. I got my NEB in a used book store (I don't recall ever seeing one available through CBD); my REB came as one of four of the translations in *The Complete Parallel Bible* (which is one of the more interesting of the parallel Bibles, containing the NRSV, the REB, the NAB and the NJB, along with the **apocrypha**).

Once and awhile, I come across a translation completely out of left field, e.g.:

Passage	REB	NASB	Young's <i>Literal Translation</i>
Job 19:26	I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself.	"Even after my skin is destroyed [lit., <i>which they have cut off</i> ], Yet from my flesh I shall see God;	And after my skin hath compassed this <i>body</i> , Then from my flesh I see God:

When I read this, I had to double-check to make certain that I was in the right chapter, verse and book. Their explanation is: *probable reading: Hebrew is unintelligible.*

**Additional Features:** My version of the REB comes in *The Complete Parallel Bible*, which means that all I have are a reasonable number of footnotes, the bulk of which deal with variant readings.

The REB contains two versions of Esther; the original Hebrew version and the longer, Greek version, with the additions generally thought to be apocryphal.

Occasionally, there is a misleading footnote. In 1Sam. 9:24, the Hebrew is a bit confusing as there is a word found there which is found nowhere else in Scripture. REB's rendering of that verse is reasonable: *So the cook took up the whole haunch and leg and put it before Saul; and Samuel said, 'Here is the portion of meat kept for you. Eat it; it has been reserved for you at this feast to which I have invited the people.'* *Portion of meat* is footnoted as the probable reading, noting that the Hebrew reads: *what is left over*. This is not what the Hebrew actually reads. A reasonably literal rendering of the Hebrew is: *Then the cook took up the leg and the portion attached and set [it] before Saul. Then he [Samuel] said, "Look, the portion set aside is being placed before you—eat, since to the appointed time [it] [the meat] was kept for you, saying the people I have assembled."* And so Saul ate with Samuel on that day. Although the Hebrew is clunky and there is probably a better sense to be found in the Greek of this passage, the footnote misleads us as to what the Hebrew actually says. Again, the REB is a literal, very readable translation—just do not base any point of doctrine upon its rendering or its footnotes.

**Recommendations:** I would not mourn the unavailability of the NEB; I would, instead, search out a REB, which tends to be bereft of Old English phraseology.

**Additional Notes:** Some time ago, I picked up a copy of *The Complete Parallel Bible*, thinking to myself, "The NRSV, REB, NAB and NJB—that is an unusual grouping of translations." I no longer think that. Even though two of these are officially Catholic Bibles (i.e., they are accepted by the Catholic Church—the latter two) and two of them are protestant Bibles, they actually have a great deal in common. When the Septuagint offers an alternate reading, all four lean toward the Septuagint's reading. They all are influenced by **charismatics**/mystics. Also, all of them translate several books of the Apocrypha (the Protestant REB and the NRSV actually translate more books than the other two).

## The Revised Standard Version

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** The Revised Standard Version

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:** In 1937, the International Council of Religious Education authorized a committee to revise the **ERV** so that the new revision would ...*embody the best results of modern scholarship as to the meaning of the Scriptures, and express this meaning in English and preserves those qualities which have given to the King James Version a supreme place in English Literature.*<sup>103</sup> It was completed and published in 1946–1952 (delayed because of WWII). I did not realize this. For some reason, in the back of my mind, I had thought that the **ASV** and the **RSV** came out about the same time, at the turn of the century. However, there was an original **ERV** which did come out near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see the footnote for the next paragraph).

**Stated Purpose:** This translation purports to be a revision of the KJV, the original ERV<sup>104</sup> and the ASV. It is *not* a new translation from the Greek and Hebrew texts.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** when there is no obvious scribal error, the RSV follows the Hebrew Massoretic text rather than the Greek Septuagint (Judges 1:18 15:5 18:17–18). They did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. Follows the Vulgate and the Greek in Judges 2:3 19:18, but alludes to the Hebrew by footnote. There is a missing passage from Judges 16:13–14, which is found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. This is included in the translation of the RSV and appropriately footnoted.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** Both Old and New Testaments. I believe that the Apocrypha was also translated, but is not included with every version of the RSV.

**Vocabulary:**

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<sup>103</sup> Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 426; taken from the preface of the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>104</sup> The English Revised Version of 1881–1885, which was primarily a revision and update of the KJV initiated by the Church of England, but the translation was a product of several groups of scholars from several denominations, including an American contingent. Changes from the KJV required a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote. ZPEB calls it a *conservative, cautious revision of the KJV...[which] retained much, but not all, of the English style of the KJV. It has had considerable circulation but has never come near the KJV in sales or popular favor. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, pp. 579–580. Quite frankly, I had never heard of this version until I began this comparison.

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:** Whereas the **ASV** was criticized for being too literal in their rendering of the Old Testament, the **RSV** was criticized for going to the opposite extreme. Some felt that many of the Messianic passages were blurred; many did not like the translation of *young woman* instead of *virgin* in Isa. 7:14.

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** Each chapter has a heading and there is a heading at the top of the page as well.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** This is probably made obsolete by the New Revised Standard Version.

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:** ZPEB comments: *It still retains something of the literary style of the KJV. Its renderings are dignified and free from vulgar, slangy or merely contemporary usages. The theological liberalism of many of the translators certainly affect their work, especially at certain crucial points such as Isaiah 7:14. Exception may be taken, also, to the rather free use of conjectural emendation (which is sometimes, but not always, indicated in footnotes). The RSV has proven very popular and is widely used, though it lags far behind the KJV in circulation and popularity.*<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580.

## The Septuagint

**Version examined:** There are apparently 300 versions of the Greek Septuagint.<sup>106</sup> I used Brenton's Septuagint with Apocrypha. There are apparently two major versions of the early Septuagint, one being the Alexandrian text. Brenton uses the other version (although he includes additional material from the Alexandrian version).

**Summation:**

The first major translation ever made from one language was the translation of the Old Testament, written in Hebrew, to the more commonly spoken Greek immediately prior to the Greek era. Although the early Christians adopted this version as *their Bible*, this translation was made by Jewish scholars prior to the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

**Preface:**

**Translation:** The Septuagint

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:** 300–100 B.C.

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** The Old Testament and Apocrypha.

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:** The best way to describe the Septuagint is, imagine that we have assembled the various teams of translators for the NASB, the NRSV, the NLT, God's Word™ and a few other translation, and then assigned various books to various teams. The end result would be a very uneven translation, with some translators adhering to almost a word-for-word rendering, while others translate the gist of each passage. This is the Septuagint. Furthermore, textual criticism would have been in its absolute infancy, so we would expect uneven translation from that aspect as well.

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

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<sup>106</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 344.

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** None.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** There are many times when there is little or no resemblance between the Greek and Hebrew text. Some examples:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint
1Sam. 14:14	And that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land.	And the first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor-bearer effected was twenty men, with darts and slings, and pebbles of the field

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:** For those of you who study the Scriptures in great detail, you must have a copy of the Septuagint.

**Additional Notes:**

## Today’s English Version (a.k.a., Good News Bible)

**Version examined:**

**Summation:** A fairly simple but reasonably accurate translation. If you have weak reading skills, this might be your best choice.

**Preface:**

**Translation:** Today’s English Version, also known as the Good News Bible.

**Translators:**

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** TEV took the negative found in the Greek of Judges 1:18, but did not translate the fourth city named in the Greek. In Judges 2:3, the translator went with the Greek and the Vulgate rather than with the Hebrew, but a footnote gives the Hebrew (this is often done; e.g., Job 15:23, 30, 32). Where there is a serious problem, an obvious scribal error, the TEV will go with the most reasonable reading (example: Judges 10:4). It chose the number *thirty* from the Hebrew rather than the number *thirty-two* from the Greek in the same passage. It went with the Hebrew rather than the Greek in Judges 15:5. There is a missing passage from Judges 16:13–14, which is found in the Greek but not in the Hebrew. This is included in the translation of TEV and appropriately footnoted. The TEV also followed the Greek Septuagint in Judges 19:18, but appropriately footnoted it. It followed the Greek in 1Chron. 1:51a. **1Sam. 13:15** is a passage which is very different in the Greek and the Hebrew; the error appears to be with the Hebrew; the TEV follows the Greek, and footnotes the differences.

There are times when the TEV departs from both the MT and the LXX in order to fit its own style (e.g., Judges 18:17–18, which is somewhat of a melding of the two). Job 15:11–12 is another example of this:

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	TEV
15:11	"[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?"	"You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	God offers you comfort; why still reject it? We have spoken for him with calm, even words.
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flashed,	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	But you are excited and glare at us in anger.
15:13	that you turn around unto God your spirit and you cause to go out from your mouth [such] words."	That you have vented rage before the Lord and you have delivered such words from [your] mouth"	You are angry with God and denounce him.

More examples of the **TEV** from the book of Job as compared to the Greek and Hebrew texts:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	TEV
Job 16:14	He breaks through me, a break upon faces of a break He runs upon me like a warrior.	They overthrow me with fall upon fall; they ran upon me by means of might.	He wounds me again and again; he attacks like a soldier gone mad with hate.
Job 16:18	Earth will not cover my blood and [there] is no [resting] place for my cry.	Earth, cover not over the blood of my flesh, and let my cry have no place.	O Earth, don't hide the wrongs done to me! Don't let my call for justice be silenced!
Psalms 44:18	Has not been turned back my heart and so are [not] turned our steps from Your way...	And our heart has not gone back, but You have turned aside our paths from Your way.	We have not been disloyal to you; we have not disobeyed your commands.

You will note that the **TEV**, if anything, is far too simplified, and, on occasion, too imaginative. However, this does not mean that this translation has no place in this world. It should be distributed level-appropriate.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is generally rendered *strange tongue(s)* in I Cor. 12–14; but it is rendered *languages* in I Cor. 13:1.

**Portion Translated:** The Old and New Testaments, presented in the traditional KJV order.

**Vocabulary:** Limited vocabulary in order to reduce the reading level. Perhaps it reads at about an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level or lower?

**Grade Level:** Intermediate school or low freshman high school level. There is nothing wrong with having a translation which is at a lower reading level. This is good for young people and those with limited innate ability or limited academic skills. Once and awhile, concessions are made where they are not necessary. The *pharaoh* of Egypt is called the *king* of Egypt in 1Sam. 2:27.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** This occasionally reveals a theologically liberal slant. There are some passages which are prophetic which are translated in such a way to sound too pat (e.g., 1Sam. 2:31–34 22:17–20).

Once and awhile, they really miss the mark, e.g. when Saul prophesies among the prophets (which is the correct rendering of 1Sam. 10:10b). What we find in the TEV is: *...he joined in their ecstatic dancing and shouting*. There is no *dancing or shouting* referred to in this chapter. This was made up by the Good News Bible translators. They do this again in 1Sam. 19:20.

I recall this translation as coming out in the 70's during the period of time when there were a lot of *Jesus freaks*.<sup>107</sup> I would not be surprised if this translation had the affect of pointing many of them in the direction of the charismatic movement.

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<sup>107</sup> What I mean here is former hippies or hippy-sympathizers who would not shed some of their counter-culture viewpoints after becoming believers. These would be the types who saw Jesus as the first long-haired revolutionary who wandered around almost aimlessly without a job in sandals. He did, by the way, probably wear sandals and He did have a beard.

**Description of Translation:** I had read a lot of negative propaganda about this translation and approached it with a rather negative bias. However, it tends to be a very readable, and relatively accurate, translation. It does tend to get a little free-form at times and it is presented at a lower reading level than most translations.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to God are not capitalized. Also, in some passages (e.g., 1Sam. 19:20), the word *spirit* is not capitalized, even though the entire phrase is *Spirit of God*.

**Order of Translation:** Traditional ordering.

**Strong Points:** My original bias was strongly against translations like the TEV, but for reasons different than what you find expressed in this evaluation. There are many difficult verses in the Bible, and sometimes, the meaning is just not clear in the Greek or the Hebrew. Once and awhile, the Good News Bible renders a verse in such a way as to maintain the integrity of the original, yet make it more understandable. Some examples follow below:

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	TEV
1Sam. 3:11	And so said Y <sup>e</sup> howah unto Samuel, "Behold, I am doing a word in Israel which all hearing him will tingle his two ears.	And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I execute my words in Israel; whoever hears them, both his ears will tingle.	The LORD said to him, "Some day I am going to do something to the people of Israel that is so terrible that everyone who hears about it will be stunned.
	Even though the <i>ears tingling</i> is the most accurate rendering of the Greek and Hebrew both, that language does not convey the meaning, which is that what God would do would <i>shock</i> all those who heard about it.		
Psalms 10:14	You have seen for You, misery [from exhaustion] and taunting provocation, You do carefully examine to take in Your hands; upon You he forsakes [the] hapless; [to the] fatherless, You [even] You have been a helper.	You see; You [even] You contemplate suffering and anger to deliver them over into Your hands. To You is left the poor; You were a helper of orphan.	But you do see; you take notice of trouble and suffering and are always ready to help. The helpless man commits himself to you; you have always helped the needy.

Therefore, it is clear that a word-by-word translation is not always the best translation.

**Weak Points:** Unfortunately, this version is occasionally dumbed down to a point where verses mean something entirely different from what they were intended to mean. For example, in Psalm 19:13, David speaks of being kept from acts of arrogance and pride. TEV incorrectly renders this: **Keep me safe, also, from willful sins; don't let them rule over me. Then I shall be perfect and free from the evil of sin.** The problem is that this verse does not mean that at all. Some people—particularly those who are intellectually lazy—will take a verse and a passage and try to *live* it before studying anything else. In fact, one could meditate upon this verse and pray and fast, and determine that there is such a thing as sinless perfection in this life.

Although the title for God, *the Lord of Hosts* (i.e., *the Lord of the Armies*) is found 235 times in the Old Testament, it is not found in the Good News Bible. Instead, we find *the Lord Almighty*. I wonder if the translators found the title *the Lord of the Armies* to be too difficult to understand or did it offend their sensitive natures?

A problem which I have with many of the simplified modern-English translations is that they sometimes sound trite or trivial. Some examples below:



	NASB	NIV	TEV
1Sam. 17:28	Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."	When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."	Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard David talking to the men. He became angry with David and said, "What are you doing here? Who is taking care of those sheep of yours out there in the wilderness? You smart aleck, you! You just came to watch the fighting!"
Slang is dangerous to use, as it dates and trivializes any passage wherein it is found. When Eliab says, "You smart aleck, you!" we expect him to next give David a noogie.			

**Criticisms:** As any good translation should have, there are footnotes dealing with the translation. However, in keeping with the gist of this translation, the footnotes are oversimplified as well. When confirming a translation of their own which is different than the MT, they generally footnote it with *One ancient translation*; this is misleading when often there are several ancient translations which agree with the alternate reading. Sometimes they misstate what the original Hebrew reads. In 1Sam. 14:47b, the TEV reads *Wherever he fought he was victorious*. The footnote is: *One ancient translation was victorious; Hebrew acted wickedly*. Actually, the Hebrew word is the Hiphil imperfect of *râsha'* (רָשָׁע) [pronounced *raw-SHAHG*], which means *to declare guilty, to declare unrighteous, to condemn, to overcome [as the righteous over the wicked]*. Therefore, there is no problem with the Hebrew rendering, even though their oversimplified footnote makes it seem that there is.

Another criticism is that the inscriptions found in the psalms are left out. They affix their own chapter heading to each psalm, giving you an idea as to what to expect; but the original inscription has simply been left out. There is really no reason for them to do this.

One of the biggest problems with a thought-for-thought translation is, they provide misleading information. Some examples follow:

	HCSB	God's Word™	TEV
1Sam. 30:13b	"I'm an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite man," he said. "My master abandoned me when I got sick three days ago."	"I'm an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite," the young man answered. "My master left me behind because I got sick three days ago."	"I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite," he answered. "My master left me behind three days ago because I got sick."
The difference is subtle, and you might now even see it. This Egyptian slave has been sick for three days. This verse does not tell us when he was left behind by his master. That could have been a day ago or an hour ago.			

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:** Now, despite all of this fancy layout and the options available to the translators, they fall short in many areas (my copy of the TEV was printed in 1978, however). The psalms have titles and they also have parenthetical information which is properly formatted (like so many translations do, including the KJV). However,

there are areas where such formatting should be applied, and is not. In the first nine chapters of 1Chronicles, we have a list of various genealogies. Each of these is properly titled in the original and at least one of them (Reuben's) has a parenthetical statement as we find in the psalms. However, the TEV translators do not appear to be aware of this and they must add a great deal of additional verbiage to make the first couple words of 1Chron. 5:1 blend in with that which follows. Furthermore, that which is parenthetical and would have been better served in italics or smaller print right below the title, is not properly reformatted in any such way. If we are going to go with modern formatting, then we should allow for Scripture to lead us to do it correctly.

**Section Headings:** Section headings are centered, in bold, italicized and in a slightly larger font.

**Footnotes:** Most of the footnotes in the translation deal with, of all things, textual criticism, which is not something that I would have expected from a translation which tends to be very simplistic. Alternate readings are offered, and preferred readings are given. I did not care that older translations were pretty much all grouped under the heading *ancient translation*; however, given the lower reading level of the translation itself, briefer, less-involved footnotes are apropos.

**Personal Comments:** When I first began this comparison of the various translations, I had a fairly negative opinion of the *Good News Bible*, thinking that it was simply a dumbing-down of God's Word. I thought that the TEV had been *too dumbed down*. I did not recognize or realize its need or importance. However, I have since come to appreciate this translation and view it as a scholarly work of men who are simply making this a very readable translation for a lower reading level. There is nothing wrong with that and only an intellectual snob would object to their approach. In my own personal exegetical studies, I now regularly quote from the TEV, as it provides a clear and fresh perspective on many verses.

**Additional Features:** The Good News Bible has a couple of minor additional features, but those which are apropos for a lower reading level. There is a 10 page word list in the back of the book dealing with words that the reader may be unfamiliar with (e.g., *ephod* or *Astarte*). There are 4 black and white maps as well, including one of Jerusalem.

**Recommendations:** If you do not comfortably read on the level of a Senior in High School or a Freshman in college, then this is an excellent version of the Scriptures to purchase.

**Additional Notes:** ZPEB points out that this version was *inexpensively published for mass circulation*, the end result being that TEV *attained considerable popularity*. ZPEB adds that this version might help many to become Bible readers, but warn that it should not be depended upon exclusively.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted and paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 581.

## The Twentieth Century NT, 1904

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** The Twentieth Century NT, 1904. I actually only have a couple of books from this translation. The little that I have read these books, I tend to the translation very much.

**Translators:** This translation is the product of 20 scholars, both pastors and laymen, of various denominations, none of whom turned out to be linguists or textual critics, surprisingly enough. The order varies significantly from most translations. Their identities were not revealed in the translation itself; Kenneth W. Clark, 50 years after the publication of the **Twentieth Century NT**, found the secretarial records of this translation in the John Drylands Library, in Manchester, and he revealed their identities. As to their *lack of scholarship*, Clark observed, *Somewhere along the line, some transforming miracle seems to have occurred. We are forced to conclude that their devotion to their task has made of them better scholars than they were at first.*<sup>109</sup> As an example, the first book is the book of Mark.<sup>110</sup>

**Date of Translation:** 1902

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** New Testament only.

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:** Unique.

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<sup>109</sup> Kenneth W. Clark, "The Making of the Twentieth Century New Testament," *Bulletin of the John Drylands Library* (1955), p. 81.

<sup>110</sup> The information from this paragraph comes from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580. Much of it was paraphrased.

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** Section headings are numbered by Roman numerals and centered.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** I, unfortunately, do not have the entire New Testament. I just have part III of a 3 part set, which include several books (letters, actually) from the New Testament, as well as Revelation. However, I find the reading to be clear, intelligible, and noteworthy.

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## The New Testament in Modern English (J. B. Phillips)

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:**

**Translators:** J. B. Phillips

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:**

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## Weymouth's The New Testament in Modern Speech

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** The New Testament in Modern Speech

**Translators:** Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth, who is a British Baptist layman. He was consulted for the Twentieth Century New Testament. I assume that means that he was not one of the translators, per se. This particular version has been revised twice since Weymouth's death, once by a James A. Robertson of Aberdeen in 1924. Since Geisler and Nix only mention Robertson's revision and another source mentioned the two revisions, perhaps it was Robertson who commandeered both revisions (?).

**Date of Translation:** First published in 1903, after Weymouth's death.

**Stated Purpose:** *Weymouth himself had envisioned his effort as a "succinct and compressed running commentary (not doctrinal) to be used side by side with its elder compeers the AV and RV."*<sup>111</sup>

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glôssa (γλωσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament.

**Portion Translated:** New Testament.

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** Apparently, Weymouth had some unorthodox views about eternal life and used the phrase *life of the ages*. This was changed to *eternal life* by Robertson in one of the revisions.<sup>112</sup>

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

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<sup>111</sup> Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 440.

<sup>112</sup> From footnote Norman Geisler, William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 440.

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** Section headings are bold, but are off to the left side within the paragraph, indenting the first few lines of the paragraph.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:** This is a nice, modern English translation, which you might only be able to find as a used book. ZPEB: *It is a product of substantial scholarship and is marked by a reverent attitude toward the text of Scripture.*<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> This quote and the information in this paragraph comes from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580.



## Today's New International Version (TNIV)

### Version examined:

### Summation:

### Preface:

I do not have a copy of this. This information comes from various web sites. However, this version has stirred up a great deal of controversy, due to its *gender-neutral* rendering of many passages (explained below). The translators refer to it as *gender-inclusive*.

**Translation:** Today's New International Version

**Translators:** The Committee on Bible Translation (CBT) produced the TNIV. The CBT is established to be an independent self-perpetuating body of the most renowned English-speaking linguists and scholars in the world. It was formed in 1965 and commissioned to develop the NIV, by far the most read, most trusted English translation worldwide. The CBT has an ongoing commitment to produce additional translations in the same standard of excellence as the NIV.<sup>114</sup>

**Date of Translation:** 1996

**Stated Purpose:** Motivated by changes in English language and a need for certain clarifications, the CBT produced the TNIV. To ensure accuracy, scholars translate directly from the most reliable copies of the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Built on the foundation of the NIV, the TNIV also incorporates hundreds of updates from reviews and critiques that the CBT has received since the NIV was published. This rendition of Scripture provides a new choice for those who desire a contemporary, but highly accurate translation. At the same time, those who continue to love and trust the NIV will continue to have access to it in its present form.<sup>115</sup>

The TNIV incorporates textual changes that reflect a better understanding of the meaning of the original Greek and Hebrew. The majority of the changes are made to better clarify passages or update colloquial English without altering the meaning. With 7 percent change from the NIV, the TNIV matches the NIV word-for-word most of the time. Updates include:

Word changes that more precisely render the meaning of the original text and thus improve accuracy. For example, "Christ" is changed to "Messiah" when the underlying Greek functions as a title.

A better understanding of the meaning of certain terms in the original Greek and Hebrew. References to "the Jews" are described more specifically, such as "the Jews there" or "the Jewish leaders," when the context indicates a more precise group of people.

Everyday language to improve understanding without changing meaning. For example, Mary is said to be "pregnant" rather than the archaic "with child," thus reflecting language more commonly used today.

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<sup>114</sup> From [http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV\\_QuickFacts.pdf](http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV_QuickFacts.pdf).

<sup>115</sup> From [http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV\\_QuickFacts.pdf](http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV_QuickFacts.pdf).

Changes in paragraph structure, sentence structure, word order, punctuation, spelling and capitalization as well as minor word changes based on contemporary English style. For example, the TNIV omits the vocative “O” as it has fallen out of everyday use.

Generic language where the meaning of the text was intended to include both men and women. For example, “sons of God” becomes “children of God,” and “brothers” becomes “brothers and sisters” when it is clear the original text never intended any specific gender reference.

The TNIV is not merely a gender-accurate edition of the NIV. More than 70 percent of the changes made were not related to gender.

The TNIV retains male terminology, as present in the original text, for all references to God without exception.

All gender-related changes in the TNIV are made to update masculine terminology that, in view of the immediate context, is often misunderstood and clearly used with generic intent. The changes do not have any doctrinal impact upon the text of Scripture.

The TNIV sometimes uses a generic plural pronoun in the place of a masculine singular pronoun, making it more consistent with contemporary English practice.<sup>116</sup>

#### **Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:**

#### **Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

#### **Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

#### **Notes on the New Testament Translation:**

**Portion Translated:** As of 2003, there is only the New Testament. Translators are working on the Old Testament.

#### **Vocabulary:**

#### **Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:** The translators apparently have assumed that the average female reader was not sharp enough to recognize that the word *man* could be used in a *gender-neutral* sense.

**Bias:** Obviously, one of their purposes was to produce a Bible translation which was *gender-inclusive*; that is, a sort of Bible which would make women feel as though they were more of a part of Scripture. One of the problems is that it was once understood that the use of the word *man* and *he* could often been gender-neutral terms. In the English, in many contexts, the word *man* refers to *mankind* or, if you did not grasp that, to *people* in general. Furthermore, a half-way decent pastor would make it clear that was the context of the passage.

#### **Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:** Pronouns related to God and to Christ are not capitalized.

#### **Order of Translation:**

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<sup>116</sup> From [http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV\\_QuickFacts.pdf](http://www.tniv.info/pdf/TNIV_QuickFacts.pdf).

**Strong Points:** Now, even though the TNIV translates many singular words as plurals in order to be *gender-inclusive*, this does not always yield a bad result. I have one example below:

Passage	NIV	TNIV
Heb. 2:6	"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"	"What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"
<p>The reader can be confused with the original, as <i>Son of Man</i> is often a title for the humanity of Jesus Christ. However, when translated as the TNIV does, there is no confusion and the essential meaning of the original is maintained. On the other hand, another easy way to distinguish is to capitalize <i>Son of Man</i> when referring to our Lord and leave it in lowercase letters in this passage.</p>		

**Weak Points:** In order for some passages to be rendered *gender-neutral*, the singular is changed into a plural. However, there are other passages which read in a similar fashion and are changed from singular to plural, even though there is no reason for such a change. Examples:

Passage	NIV	TNIV
Luke 17:3	If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.	If any brother or sister sins against you, rebuke the offender; and if they repent, forgive them.
<p>Although the sense given in the TNIV is accurate, I would hope that anyone could read the NIV and get the same sense from the passage.</p>		
John 6:44	No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.	No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.
<p>Again the sense is accurate, but there is no reason to change the singular into a plural. Furthermore, why match up a plural at the end of the verse (<i>them</i>) with a singular at the beginning (<i>one</i>)? A bigger problem is that this could be misunderstood to mean that God calls groups of people rather than individuals.</p>		
John 11:25	Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."	Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die."
<p>The criticism is that the force of the promise to an individual is obscured by this rendering. Also, it is important to note that even though Jesus is speaking to Martha, He uses the generic <i>he</i>.</p>		
Acts 20:30	Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.	Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.
<p>Here we have a real problem with distortion. The word used for <i>men</i> in the original is <i>andres</i> (ἀνδρες), a word which <i>never</i> refers to females.</p>		
I Cor. 14:28	If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.	If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to God when alone.

Passage	NIV	TNIV
<p>Interestingly enough, in the NIVI, this reads: <b>If there is no interpreter, the speakers should keep quiet in the church and speak to themselves and God.</b> Obviously, it sounds as though a group of tongues-speakers are encouraged to go off by themselves and speak in tongues. Now, you may wonder, how does such a passage get into the NIVI, but not the TNIV? There are two possibilities: (1) the translators of the TNIV read the negative comments on the NIVI and agreed. (2) The passage was debated at 9 am rather than at 4 pm. One author that I read gave examples of several <i>4 pm passages</i>. The idea inferred is that a passage which would be hotly debated at 9 am would have been accepted with little discussion by the same group at 4 pm, when everyone is tired and ready to go home.</p>		
<b>Rev. 3:20</b>	I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.	I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.
<p>Again, the problem is, God's relationship to the individual is lost, and what appears to be the case is that God is dealing with a group.</p>		

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:**

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**

## Williams Translation of the New Testament

**Version examined:**

**Summation:**

**Preface:**

**Translation:** Williams' Translation of the New Testament

**Translators:** Charles B. Williams. This particular New Testament translation is subtitled *A Translation in the Language of the People*. Charles B. Williams (who must be distinguished from British scholar Charles K. Williams) is an American Baptist scholar. ZPEB says [*This translation*] is regarded by many as one of the best of the modern versions of the New Testament.<sup>117</sup>

**Date of Translation:**

**Stated Purpose:**

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:**

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** In I Cor. 12–14, glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is usually rendered *speaking in ecstasy*. It is rendered *languages* in I Cor. 13:1

**Portion Translated:** The New Testament.

**Vocabulary:**

**Grade Level:**

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:**

**Description of Translation:**

**Capitalization:**

**Order of Translation:**

**Strong Points:**

**Weak Points:**

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<sup>117</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 580. The other information in this paragraph came from the same source.

**Criticisms:**

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Section Headings:** Each chapter has an extended heading.

**Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:** You will probably only find a copy of this used. I don't know that it is worth the look.

## World English Bible (WEB)

### Version examined:

**Summation:** This is a version which I discovered on the Internet which purports itself to be a revision of the American Standard version. Note the clever acronym.

### Preface:

### Translation:

### Translators:

### Date of Translation:

### Stated Purpose:

### Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:

### Notes on the Old Testament Translation:

### Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:

### Notes on the New Testament Translation:

### Portion Translated:

### Vocabulary:

### Grade Level:

### Assumptions Made:

### Bias:

### Description of Translation:

### Capitalization:

### Order of Translation:

### Strong Points:

### Weak Points:

### Criticisms:

**Their Comments:**

**Layout:**

**Personal Comments:**

**Additional Features:**

**Recommendations:**

**Additional Notes:**



## Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible

**Version examined:**

**Summation:** A slavishly literal rendering of the Masoretic text and the Greek text.

**Preface:**

**Translation:** *Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*

**Translators:** Dr. Robert Young

**Date of Translation:** 1890's.

**Stated Purpose:** As in the title, Young’s intention was to bring a more literal translation of the Bible, pointing out that the KJV sometimes translated one Hebrew word by up to 70 and 80 different English words.

**Manuscripts Used in the Old Testament:** Young seems to clearly default to the Massoretic Text more than yield to the older codices with few exceptions, a more notable one being Job 9:32. Even when there is clear precedent for a passage, e.g., Joshua 15:59b being found in the Septuagint, but missing in the MT, Young’s *Literal Translation* will leave this out as well. Young tend to lean toward using the Hebrew MT instead of Greek (e.g., Judges 1:18 15:5 18:17–18 19:18 1Sam. 4:1 1Chron. 1:51a Job 15:30). He did not allude to the Greek in Judges 1:18. In Judges 2:3, the Young went with the Greek and the Vulgate rather than with the Hebrew, which is the exception in Young’s rendering. There are times when the Hebrew appears to be a scribal error and Young will fix the scribal error (example: Judges 10:4; *cities* instead of repeating *asses*). However, there are instances where the Greek clearly contains the correct original rendering, lost in the Hebrew, and Young does not restore it (e.g., Judges 16:13–14 **1Sam. 13:15**).

When it comes to Job 15:11–13, Young’s translation is unique. I do not know the reasoning behind his rendering of this passage.

Job	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint	Young’s Literal Translation
15:11	“[Are] the consolations of God insignificant to you; even a word [spoken] gently to you?”	“You have been scourged for few of your sins; you have spoken proudly and extravagantly.	Too few for thee are the comforts of God? And a gentle word <i>is</i> with thee,
15:12	How your heart carried you away! And how your eyes flash,	What has your heart dared? Or why do your eyes flash?	What—doth thine heart take thee away? And what—are thine eyes high?
15:13	that you turn around unto God your spirit and you cause to go out from your mouth [such] words.”	That you have vented rage before the Lord and you have delivered such words from [your] mouth”	For thou turnest against God thy spirit? And has brought out words from thy mouth:

The meaning of the Greek verb in v. 12b is uncertain; the Hebrew verb is used a second time. How Young decided upon eyes being *high*, I don't know.

**Notes on the Old Testament Translation:** Most of my work has been in the Old Testament, and what Young has accomplished here is, for me, a God-send. He makes a valiant attempt at a one-to-one Hebrew to English translation; something completely lacking in the KJV (which is one of the most literal translations). In reading Young's prefaces, you will be completely amazed at some of the linguistic shortcomings of the KJV.

**Manuscripts Used in the New Testament:**

**Notes on the New Testament Translation:** Glōssa (γλῶσσα) [pronounced *GLOHS-sah*], is consistently rendered *tongue(s)* in the New Testament. Throughout much of I Cor. 14, glōssa is preceded by *unknown* in italics.

**Portion Translated:** Old and New Testaments.

**Vocabulary:** Archaic, written in old English.

**Grade Level:** Senior high school Shakespear students.

**Assumptions Made:**

**Bias:** From his preface (particularly the one to the revised edition), I believe that we could safely assume that Young is a believer in Christ Jesus. Young does make every effort to give us a literal rendering from both the Greek and Hebrew. Therefore, his bias simply reflects the bias of the original text.

Given the time that Young did his translation, we would not expect him to be influenced either by the tongues crowd or the gender-neutral crowd.

**Description of Translation:** This is probably the single best literal translation that there is, if you are interested in getting the most accurate translation of the Hebrew and Greek into the English. Young is very consistent and painfully faithful to the original languages. Every Biblical scholar or wannabe should own this translation.

**Capitalization:** Pronouns referring to *God* are not capitalized.

**Order of Translation:** Standard English order of the Scripture.

**Strong Points:** When words are added to smooth out the translation, they are italicized. This version is slavishly literal, consistent and accurate. Young castigates the KJV for its inconsistency (see **Additional Features** below), and therefore has to be the model of consistency. No other English translation comes even close. If you do not know the Greek or the Hebrew, and yet you need to make a theological point based upon the correct rendering of a passage of Scripture, then Young is the place to go to make certain that you've got it right.

**Weak Points:** Archaic, written in old English. The English of Young's text is not nearly as dynamic as the text of the King James Version (although this could be said of virtually every other translation). There are absolutely no footnotes to explain the choices the translator made.

**Criticisms:** One of my biggest criticisms of Young is the exact same one that I have for the NASB; he appears to be married to the manmade verse division. Therefore, in *Young's Literal Translation*, each verse appears to be separated from the previous, more so in poetry than in prose. An example is Psalm 33:14–15, which forms one complete thought, the latter verse describing the God of the former. In *Young's Literal Translation*, these verses appear to be more separated than they really are.

**Their Comments:** Young, although he says that he does not expect to supplant to the Authorized Version, he notes several inadequacies of it. (1) The KJV translators did not seem to grasp the sense of time employed by the Hebrews in their literature. When referring to a past or future event, the Hebrews often placed themselves right in the midst of that event, grammatically speaking. Personally, when I write commentary on the Old Testament, I use the present tense, even though I am speaking of past events. (2) Even more importantly, the KJV, because it was translated by so many, often gave a dozen or more English renderings to the same Hebrew word. In fact, there are four Hebrew words which are given in excess of 70 different English renderings. Consistency in the reverse is also lacking in the KJV. There are dozens of English words which represent as many as 20+ different Hebrew words. Young endeavored to bring the languages into more of a one-to-one correspondence. For those who are *KJV-only* advocates (a group which is rapidly dying out), the prefaces are a must-read.

One of the comments which I found interesting is that Young is appreciative that God has given him the interest in completing a translation of God's Word, and then also gave him the time during which to complete it. As I examine the lives of others, I am also moved to thank God for the ability and the time to examine His Word and related topics as well.

**Layout:** At the time that Young did this translation, little thought was given to layout. In the version which I have, if two or three verses make up a sentence or a thought, then they are together on the same line. However, each verse which begins a paragraph does not begin a paragraph in the English sense of the word. Poetry more or less looks like poetry.

**Section Headings:** There are column headings instead; this is done for both narrative and poetry.

#### **Footnotes:**

**Personal Comments:** Although sometimes stilted, as any word-for-word translation will be, and archaic, as Dr. Young retained much of the Old English flavor, it is one of the two translations that I will turn to for the most literal and accurate word-for-word rendering of Scriptures. What we need is some enterprising group to recognize the importance of Mr. Young's work and to update this version into a modern translation—*Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible; Updated and Revised*.

What we lack today is a very literal rendering of Scripture which is in Modern English. I would think that one approach would be to take Young's translation and simply update it; replace the *thee's* and *thou's* with *you's* and *your's*.

**Additional Features:** There are no footnotes whatsoever in Young's translation. Therefore, we are never privy to his thinking at any given point with regards to his translation. His preface and introductory material are eye-openers and are found nowhere else to the best of my knowledge. Young points out peculiarities of the Hebrew grammar which the KJV translators apparently were unaware. For instance, their *past tense* (the perfect) indicated an event which was certain. So, an event which was in the future, but certain, would call for the use of the perfect tense. There are events in the past and in the future which the Hebrews would describe as though they were in the middle of the events—therefore, they would use the *imperfect* (or, *future*) tense. I am only giving you the gist of this. Young spends two full pages describing the Hebrew tense.

Also, with respect to grammar, Young points out that the Hebrews expressed commands and laws in four different ways. Young explains the so-called wâw conversive (he spends two pages on this).

Then, in what should be real eye-opener for any KJV-only person, are two sections wherein Young deals with the KJV translation itself. In the KJV, the English verb *destroy* is used to translate 49 different Hebrew words; *before* is the English rendering for 22 different Hebrew words; *to break* is used for 33 different Hebrew words, etc. (Young gives us a full page of examples). Then, taking this from the opposite view, Young takes a dozen or so verbs in

the Hebrew, and shows how many different ways they are rendered in the English (nâthan, for instance, is rendered with 84 different English words; `âsah is translated with 74 different English words; etc.).

**Recommendations:** If you feel as though you need a very accurate rendering of God's Word, this is it. You may lack training in the Greek and Hebrew, but this can take up the slack for what you lack in those disciplines.

**Additional Notes:** Good luck finding this version. I was a believer for two decades before I even knew it existed.

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## Conclusions and Final Recommendations

**F**irst of all, I have no intention of rating these various translations from the best to the worst. That is far outside the scope of what I have the time to do; besides, such a list would be almost meaningless, given the complexity of the issues at hand. There are people of limited means who would like one or two Bibles and not 25, and I hope that this will help these to find a suitable Bible or Bibles. Some would just like to have a nice easy to read version, with very literal backup version for more detailed studies. Furthermore, there are translations which appear to come out faster than I can review them. I just added three additional translations (the **JPS**, **Moffatt's translation** and **God's Word™** to my collection a few days back).

**G**enerally speaking, the most word-for-word literal of the translations are, in order, **Young's Literal Translation**, Rotherham's **Emphasized Bible**, the **NASB**, the **NKJV** and then the **KJV**. The least literal in terms of being word-for-word translation would be, in no particular order, the **CEV**, **TEV**, the **Living Bible**, the **Complete Jewish Bible**, the **NLT**, the **NAB** and the **NJB**.

**T**he least literal translations: I must admit that at the outset of this project (which is obviously still incomplete) that I had a rather negative attitude toward such translations as the **Contemporary English Version** or **Today's English Version**. However, in examination of their translations, I have found them to be quite adequate, and, for many, the best choices. The **CEV**, **TEV**, **REB**, **NAB**, **NJB**, **NLT**, **NRSV**, **God's Word™**, and the **NIV** are outstanding translations when absolute literalness is not required (the latter three being the most literal of the group). Both the **TEV** or the **CEV** are highly recommended when one's vocabulary is limited and I strongly recommend the **CEV** for someone who just wants a new slant or second updated and very readable Bible. The **CEV**, unlike many modern English translations, does not have a liberal theological slant. However, on the negative side, both **TEV** and **CEV** are far too imaginative in their rendering of the original Greek and Hebrew, particularly in the poetry portions of Scripture. If I were to purchase a Bible for a new believer or for someone that I hoped might become a believer, I would probably choose the **CEV** (also called *The Promise*), the Study Edition of the **NIV** or *the Open Bible* (a version of the **NLT**). The only thing that would cause me to not recommend the latter Bible, is that their verse notes are poor. They are too speculative and often wrong, yet appear to be authoritative. Of these modern, less-than-literal translations, a believer would find the **CEV** or **God's Word™** to be closer to orthodox doctrine rather than the **NEB**, **NLT**, or **TEV**. And, when comparing the **CEV** with **God's Word™**, the latter is much, much more faithful to the original language.

**H**ow would I use these various translations? If I were reading through the Bible in a year (or, whatever), my choice would be the **NLT**, **God's Word** or the **CEV** (in that order). If I was about to study a particular book or chapter of the Bible, I would also turn to one of those translations for my first read-through, so that I had a good grasp of what I was about to study. Now, for going into a more in-depth study, I would certainly turn to **Young's Literal Translation**, the **NKJV** or the **NASB**. And no in-depth study of the Old Testament is complete without Owen's four volume set of the Hebrew and no in-depth study of the New Testament is complete without *The NKJV Greek English Interlinear New Testament* (which features two unknown *literal* word-for-word translations along with the **NKJV**).

**Modern Language Versions:** Most of these Bibles fall into the modern language version category, with some being very literal (e.g., the **NASB**) and some being not as literal (e.g., the **NLT** or the **CEV**). Two versions which I have been unable to locate, but have bits and pieces of are *the Twentieth Century New Testament* and *The New Century Bible*. What I have of those, I like a great deal. Weymouth's translation of the New Testament is also worth searching out, although you likely only find it used. However, even though Thieme recommended William's translation of the New Testament, and even though it is very readable, I was personally irritated with some of its mistranslations and its incorrect slant in I Cor. 12–14.

**With regard to the careful study of Scripture:** If I had to choose a limited number of Bibles from which to study from, my first choice, for accuracy and readability, would be the **NASB**. I would back this up with the **NIV Study Bible** primarily for their notes and commentary, and the translation isn't half bad (and whenever the two versions disagree, rule of thumb is that the **NASB** is correct). To get an absolute literal translation, I would first choose *Young's Literal Translation* and then Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*. If I had to have an easy-to-read, relatively simple modern English translation, then I would choose **God's Word™** over the others.

**That** being said, I should point out that I would buy *The Promise* (the **CEV**)<sup>118</sup> for a new believer (or for an unbelieving friend) or the *Open Bible* (the **NLT**). Both versions allow one to read and get a general grasp of what is going on without becoming too confused. Although I have found the **CEV** often sold for much less than the **NLT**, the latter appears to be a much better translation (see this [side-by-side comparison](#) of the two). I must admit to having a great fondness for the *Scofield Study Edition Bible* (which falls between the **KJV** and the **NKJV** with its updating) if just for its notes alone. There is no beating the Scofield Bible for its accurate notes and doctrines.

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**Layout** is one of the things often ignored by translators. Of all of the versions which I have recent reviewed, only the **CEV**, the **NLT** and, to a lesser extent, **God's Word™**, do anything dramatically different with the overall layout of Scripture. What they do is pleasant to look at and long overdue. For instance, it is clear that the psalms are titled and that most psalms have an introductory bit of information which is properly not a part of the psalm, although that information is a part of God's Word. Most versions of Scripture pay heed to this, including most printings of the **KJV** and the **NKJV**. However, in the **CEV** and the **NLT**, they have done more by way of typesetting and formatting and layout which seems to be in keeping with the translation. Their problem is that they do not go far enough. In the genealogical portion of 1Chronicles, for instance, there are phrases which are clearly designed as titles of a section and should be translated as such. I am not aware of a single translation which appears to be aware of that. I don't know how you can spend years and years on a translation, and yet not even grasp the most fundamental grammatical relationships which are clear even to the English reader in a literal translation.

**The Most Literal Translations:** Easily the best and most literal translation is *Young's Literal Translation*, although you must wade through a lot of *old English* to follow it. Any serious student of the Word of God should own this particular translation. Both the **KJV** and the **NKJV** are outstanding, literal renderings from the original languages. I am not, by any means, a **KJV**-only advocate. However, the **KJV** and Scofield's version of the King James translation are probably the best choices from a literary<sup>119</sup> standpoint. The translators of the **KJV** appear to be the only ones who clearly understood that translation is just as much an art as it is a science. There are quite a number of passages in the **KJV** which reach right out and grab you with their literary fury. The **KJV** very faithful to the original language, yet it is a work of literary art with respect to its power and eloquence. When it comes to be word-for-word literal, however, there is nothing which outdoes *Young's Literal Translation*.

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<sup>118</sup> This can be found for a very reasonable price in paperback.

<sup>119</sup> Note that I said *literary* and not *literal*.

The only other Bible translations which are even close when it comes to being that literal are the **NASB** and Rotherham's **Emphasized Bible**. What Rotherham's version has that most other versions do not are extensive (but, unfortunately, incomplete) notes concerning the variant readings (the **REB** has a lot of notes on the variant readings, but they are not as extensive and as well documented as Rotherham's).

**T**ranslations to avoid: The more that I study **Moffatt's Translation** the more I think that one could fall into non-use and we would be no worse off. It is a combination of (1) a poor and inaccurate translation; (2) it has arbitrary changes in structure; and (3) it has a liberal bend (which is fine, if the accuracy of the original language is not sacrificed). (4) This version is old enough to where a young person would not even recognize this as a modern language translation. Another version which I lost no little respect for was the **New English Bible**. From a literary standpoint, it is far superior to **Moffatt's Translation**; however, it still lacks accuracy, whether as a word-for-word or a thought-for-thought translation. Although either of these versions might provide a fresh approach, they often sacrifice accuracy along the way. No way, no how do you want the Jehovah's Witnesses **New World Translation**. It is a self-serving translation put together in order that they might better support their cultic traditions and doctrines.

**V**ersions and flavors: I was personally raised on **Scofield's Reference Bible**, which is the **KJV** with some updating, and it is an outstanding Bible for its notes, although it is unfortunate that there are not more. Furthermore, its updating of the **KJV** is excellent and unobtrusive. When it comes to notes, it is hard to beat the **NIV Study Bible**. About every other verse has a note concerning it, and 95% of them appear to be accurate. My own personal favorite, although it skimps on the notes, is the **New American Standard Bible**. This is both an outstanding translation as well as a very readable Bible. If you own just one Bible, this should be it. They have done some updating since their first release and the update lacks the *thee's* and *thou's* (when referring to deity). I prefer the updated version. My only other suggestion is that, whatever Bible you choose, do not skimp on the binding. A leather-bound Bible is worth the additional ten or twenty bucks for something that you will use for the rest of your life. I have owned an **NIV Study Bible** for a couple of years now, and it is not my principal Bible—still, the binding is coming apart. My first **KJV** is in tatters (the Scofield version) for the same reason (I gave that Bible a workout, however). My **NASB**, although I have used it for twenty years, and although it does have some book tape on it, is still in very good condition, considering the number of times it has been opened. If you want to own the apocrypha (for whatever reason) and a couple of unusual translations, my I recommend *The Complete Parallel Bible* published by Oxford University Press; I am not all that pleased with my binding, but bear in mind, it is four complete Bibles in one. It also provides four fairly different translations, two or three of which (**REB**, **NAB** and the **NJB**) are fairly rare. If you have an interest in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, may I highly recommend John Joseph Owens' **Analytical Key to the Old Testament**, which is invaluable to me in translating the Old Testament. All the Hebrew words are here; they are parsed to the max (for instance, any verb will be identified with respect to tense, stem, number, gender and person); they are also coded to the page numbers of **The Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon**. The translation is roughly the **RSV** with a few changes made by Owens. Zodiates has a version of the **KJV**, (Old and New Testaments are separate books) where the verbs are partially parsed (stem and gender) and the Strong's number is given. The Old Testament comes with a partially Hebrew Lexicon and the New Testament comes with a partial Greek Lexicon and Greek Concordance. Also, for those who are just getting their feet wet, there is a short but invaluable section explaining the grammatical notations.

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**I** should say a word or two about the two chronological Bibles that I am aware of: The Reese Chronological Bible (**KJV**) and The Narrated Bible (**NIV**). It is very difficult to place the Bible into chronological order. Problems that you would expect, e.g., when did the book of Job occur, are less difficult than you would suspect. More subtle is, do you go with when a portion of Scripture was written or when it occurred (you *think* you have an immediate, easy answer for that)? What about genealogies? They make even less sense if broken up chronologically. What about prophetic writings? What about books which overlap? Even though the book of Ruth occurred during the book of Judges, would you still want to integrate the former into the latter? Certain books like Ruth, Song of Solomon and some of the minor prophets are literary wholes. They lose their meaning if separated into several

portions. When do you make the decision to split up a book or to rearrange a chapter? My point in all this is, these editors who chose to make an attempt to place Scripture into some sort of chronological order are beset with a half dozen major problems to begin with. The better you understand Scripture, the more often you might say, *I certainly wouldn't have done it that way*. Nevertheless, these versions are quite important and some will find invaluable.

**F**inally, if the **KJV** is the only Bible for you (which means you wouldn't even be reading this), then pick up a copy of the **NKJV** for your children and a Scofield KJV for yourself. The most negative aspect of these two translations, apart from the archaic rendering of the **KJV**, is that they are both based upon inferior manuscripts. Thousands upon thousands of manuscripts have been discovered since the translation into the King James' English, and many of them are superior to those that the translator's under King James had to work with. Therefore, there will be certain areas of the Bible where a more recently translated Bible would be more suitable for Bible study. However, let us never underestimate the power of the King James diction when it comes to certain verses of Scripture. It is what many people of the previous generation memorized and some of these translations have never been improved upon.

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**C**oncordances: In terms of personal study, one will often need a concordance. Off the top of my head, I know there are concordances for the **KJV**, the **NASB** and the **NIV** (*Strong's KJV Concordance* is generally very reasonable in terms of price). There must be one out for the **NKJV**. Personally, I prefer a Hebrew and a Greek concordance rather than an English one. They are more helpful when it comes to determining the actual definition for a word.

**B**ook source: I have done business with the Christian Book Distributers for years and have been extremely happy with their prices and service. I have even returned books and have gotten a refund. They are on the web ([Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com)); however, their shipping time is generally 3–4 weeks (unlike many retailers on the Internet who appear to deliver almost overnight); they also send out catalogs (way too often, if you ask me) and are available by phone (1-800-CHRISTIAN, or 1-800-247-4784—now a toll-free number). As of October 2000, their web site was not as organized as it should be—for instance, Owens' *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* was difficult to locate and was not listed as an interlinear Bible (I was able to find it only by the name). Part of the problem is the large selection that they work with.

**W**hat I don't recommend: I would strongly recommend against the **New World Translation**, as it is self-serving and often inaccurate. Furthermore, I don't see much need for the **RSV** or the **ASV** any more, although they were good translations for their time. When I began to more carefully examine the **NEB**, I must admit that I would not recommend this version to anyone either. It has a definite liberal theological leaning which is apparent in the translation of quite a number of passages.

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## Software

When recording my examinations of the Scripture, because I make frequent references to the Hebrew and to the Greek, I can only recommend **WordPerfect** as a word processor. I was able to, from very early on, able to put together both a Greek and Hebrew keyboard, and, in one keystroke, go from the English keyboard to the Hebrew. **WordPerfect** comes complete with a set of the Greek and Hebrew alphabet. I did have to write some macros in order to place the Hebrew vowel points above and below their respective letters. You cannot, in MS Word, set up additional keyboards, and accessing Greek and Hebrew alphabets is limited (you have a very incomplete Greek alphabet built into some of the letter sets; you can add font sets which generally provide an incomplete Greek or Hebrew alphabet as well).

In relationship to the web: before I had even a clue as to what I was doing (I had Internet access for about two months), I put together my own web page and added various documents from **WordPerfect**. I found out later that other word processing programs of that era (e.g., Word '97) did not have the capabilities to publish to the web and retain most of the formatting. Word 2000 improved dramatically in this regard.

Neither of those two word processing programs can guarantee that the Greek or the Hebrew alphabets will be seen when publishing to HTML on the web. However, WP allows documents to be published to a PDF format, which can be seen on the web (a free plug-in from Adobe's web site will allow any PDF document to be seen as it was meant to be seen). PDF will preserve tables, justification, advances, footnotes, Greek, Hebrew, and other special characters, etc. It looks **exactly** like the document that you originally wrote. It does not retain hyperlinks, however in WP 9 (WP 10 does preserve the hyperlinks, however).

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## Glossary

**Apocrypha:** These are some books which were written in between the testaments. Although some of them are important from the standpoint of historical information, they are not always accurate nor are they the inspired Word of God. The Catholic Church recognizes them as inspired and it is from these books that we get such false doctrines as alms and baptism for the dead as well as purgatory. I was not aware until I began this comparison that there were some books—e.g., 3 and 4 Maccabees or 2 Esdras—which are a part of the apocrypha, but not recognized, apparently, by the Catholic Church.

**Autographs:** This would be a completely accurate copy of the original text. No autograph of any book exists today, hence the need for textual criticism. There was probably no such thing as an autograph for any of the original 3 sections of the Old Testament, and there was never a New Testament autograph, per se. it is more of an ideal that textual critics strive to attain.

**Charismatics:** One of the great changes in Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the supposed re-introduction of the gift of tongues, along with many of the other 1<sup>st</sup> century gifts. I have gone into a lengthy examination of this phenomenon, both from the standpoint of historical occurrence and from the strict interpretation of Scripture (which study is nearly 300 pages). However, suffice it to say that there are those who believe that the 1<sup>st</sup> century gifts of tongues, prophecy, and healing have returned to us in this past century and that those who exercise these gifts transcend denominational lines. Their actions in and out of church vary remarkably from frenzied, scary behavior to exhibiting a very normal and rational public demeanor. There are translations which cater to this particular subgroup. I should mention that in most or all cases where we find a translated passage which is sympathetic to charismatic theology, it is also a passage which has been interpreted rather than translated.



## Glossary

**Dispensations:** The word *dispensation* refers to the *administration of a household* (the Catholics have their own peculiar definition for this word, which has no linguistic basis). Dispensationalists have come to use this term just as much for the period of time referred to, as for the way God works during that period of time.

Dispensations are the correct understanding of man's history that God works differently with mankind from time to time. For instance, God worked specifically through the nation Israel throughout most of the recorded history of the Old Testament and He works through the Church (the body of believers) today. The incorrect understanding of this is that the Church today is spiritual Israel, and that God no longer has a plan for the nation of Israel or for the people who are genetically descended from Abraham (this is known as Covenant Theology, which is an incorrect view of man's history). Interestingly enough, there are many believers who belong to Covenant Theology churches, who, paradoxically, watch the Mid East for signs of our Lord's coming.

All believers believe in dispensations to some degree. This is why believers in the Old Testament sacrificed animals on a regular basis, whereas very few churches practice animal sacrifice (which is expressly forbidden in Heb. 9:11–25). This is one of many illustrations of the differences between religious function in the Old and New Testaments. Dispensationalism recognizes and embraces these differences.

Dispensationalism recognizes several different eras of time, and some of these eras are further broken down. Most recognize at least 4 dispensations: The Dispensation of Adam and Noah; the Dispensation of Israel; the Dispensation of the Church; and the Dispensation of the Rulership of Christ. Some break these periods of time down into sections (e.g., the pre and post canon periods of the Church Age) and some, instead, hold to there being more than 4 dispensations.

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** In 1947, in a cave eight miles south of Jericho and a mile or so west of the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, a Bedouin goatherder stumbled across some jars which contained leather scrolls wrapped in linen cloth. He took them out and sold some to an antique store in Bethlehem. Others somehow ended up in the possession of the archbishop Syrian Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem.

When some early experts examined the manuscripts, they decried them as fakes. However, it soon became apparent that some very significant had been discovered. Subsequent trips back to the cave produced hundreds of similar manuscripts. Amazingly enough, these scrolls were dated no later than 70 A.D., giving us Old Testament manuscripts which were a full millennium earlier than those in our possession up until then.

Eventually, 11 caves in all had been discovered to have had manuscripts and ancient artifacts. The manuscripts discovered here include the entire book of Isaiah (dated 100 B.C.), along with portions of every book from the Old Testament except for Esther. The manuscripts for 1 Samuel have been thought to be more accurate than what we previously had by way of the Septuagint and the Massoretic text. There were Greek texts as well (included portions of the minor prophets), which served as a witness to the accuracy and reliability of our Greek Septuagint texts. There were many manuscripts of other writings, some apocryphal and some commentaries of the Old Testament.<sup>120</sup>

**Pastor teacher:** One of the greatest misfortunes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is the caliber of pastor teachers. This is the most important gift of the post-Apostolic age; it is this gift by which the average believer grows spiritually. However, very few pastor teachers have even a clue as to what their job is. Their primary function is to study and teach; and that should often be verse-by-verse, book by book. It is tragic that most PT's use the Bible as a jumping off point rather than the focus of their lesson; it is tragic that a PT gives these weekly (or tri-weekly) maudlin sermons, quoting Bible text every three or four paragraphs without ever carefully explaining a passage in context, according to the original languages.

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<sup>120</sup> The bulk of this information came from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, pp. 50–62. Some of the information was paraphrased.

## Glossary

**Septuagint:** This was a translation of the Old Testament and Apocrypha made by approximately 70 scholars around 200–100 B.C. The Apostles often quoted from this translation. On the negative side, the Septuagint can be rather free form and it is extremely uneven. However, on the positive side, there are problematic Hebrew phrases and words which are better understood from this Greek translation. Also, on the positive side, it was translated from Hebrew manuscripts which pre-date anything we have by a Millennium.

**Textual Criticism:** This is the science of determining exactly what the original inspired text was. Some versions and some translations might leave out long passages here and there. One must determine whether those passages belong or not. Sometimes, a word seems to be wrong for a passage; textual criticism attempts to determine what the correct word is for that passage.

## Appendix

**The Virgin Birth:** One of the controversies, and, therefore, differences between many modern English translations is Isa. 7:14. Should this read, *“Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a young girl will become pregnant and give birth to a son...”* or should it read *“...a virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son...”*? Without going into the Hebrew, which is disputed at this point, let me give you two simple reasons why this should read *virgin* rather than *young girl*: (1) The men who translated the Septuagint so translated this passage; being that they knew and probably spoke both Greek and Hebrew, they would know best; and, secondly, (2) it is not much of a sign if a *young woman* becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son. I’ve taught in a high school for a couple decades, and certainly, the first time a young teen became pregnant and gave birth to a son, I may have thought it was a miracle. However, after a few dozen births, the miraculous aspect of it all wore off. Someone who argue vociferously that the Hebrew word simply means *young girl* has lost the big picture and the context of the verse.

**Isa. 53:9:** In His death, our Lord was associated with Joseph of Arimathea, who was wealthy, and offered his tomb for our Lord; and Jesus was crucified between two criminals. This is prophesied in Isa. 53:9: **His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, Yet with a rich man in His death** (NASB). Some translations, particularly those that tend toward liberal theology, render this as: **He was assigned a grave with the wicked, a burial-place among the refuse of mankind, though he had done no violence** (NEB). The liberal translation did not come out of the air. The emendation for this verse *And his tomb with evildoers* (JPS footnote). An *emendation* is a correction, suggestion, or clarification made in the margin; no change is made in the text itself. The Septuagint, translated from manuscripts which predate the Massoretic text by a millennium, uses the word *rich*. Even though the Septuagint is often uneven and occasionally rather free form, it is very helpful in a situation like this. One note, found in Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible* reads: *“ ‘Rich’ must mean ‘wicked,’ just as poor often means ‘godly’ ”*<sup>121</sup> I think the problem is that the verse possibly did not make sense to those who made the emendation, and this was their way of explaining the apparent (but not real) *contradiction*.

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## Litmus Test Passages

There are particular passages which are substantially different in the Greek and the Hebrew. Rather than list them along with every translation, explaining the differences and why one translation would be preferred over the other, I have these passages listed below and the various translations are hyperlinked to the passages.

<sup>121</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 699.

The first passage is 1Sam. 13:15, which is very different in the Greek than in the Massoretic text. The explanation is quite simple—the scribe was transcribing an old text, wrote the word *Gilgal*, then, when he looked back at the old Hebrew text to find *Gilgal* as his stopping place, he actually looked at the second instance of this word and skipped the text in between. This is a common scribal error (however, I am at a loss for find the proper name for this particular error).

	Massoretic Text (Hebrew)	Greek Septuagint
<b>1Samuel 13:15</b>	And Samuel rises and goes up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin; and Saul inspects the people who are found with him, about six hundred men.	And Samuel arose, and departed from Galgala, and the remnant of the people went after Saul to meet after the men of war, when they had come out of Galgala to Gabaa of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were found with him, about six hundred men.

It may be easier to see like where the Hebrew text is in blue and the text which the scribe left out is in violet: *And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal and the remnant of the people went after Saul to meet after the men of war, when they had come out of Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin; and Saul inspects the people who are found with him, about six hundred men.* This is a fairly obvious and easily explained error. This also tells us which translations tend to favor the Hebrew over the Greek.

Preferred Text for 1Sam. 13:15	
<b>Hebrew</b>	<i>The Amplified Bible, CEV*, The Complete Jewish Bible, The Emphasized Bible*, KJV, Modern Reader's Bible, Moffatt's translation, NASB, NKJV*, NIV*, NWT, Owen's Analytical Key to the Old Testament, NASB, Young's Literal Translation.</i>
<b>Greek</b>	God's Word™*, NAB, NEB* (the footnote here is not very helpful), NJB, NLT*, NRSV*, REB*, TEV*.
*The difference is footnoted.	

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